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SOME ACCOUNT OF  
MY COUSIN NICHOLAS.

BY THOMAS INGOLDSBY, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "THE INGOLDSBY LEGENDS."

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE RUBBER OF LIFE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

TO

THOMAS HUGHES, Esq.

OF DONNINGTON PRIORY,

IN COMITATU BERKS.

MY DEAR NAMESAKE,

THE sins of Parents are often, for wise purposes, visited on their unoffending offspring.

Not unfrequently, too, Retribution, like the Gout — a form by the way which it sometimes assumes, — skips over a generation.

Now this is precisely *your* case.—But for a much respected relative of yours, once removed, my Cousin Nicholas had never shown his unblushing face to the sun.

To her then should the responsibility, *de jure*,

11526

attach in the primary degree,—but the Age of Chivalry is not gone, let Mr. Burke—not the deaf gentleman—say what he will.

On your excellent “Governor” I dare not let it devolve;—were I so to commit myself he might, perhaps, in his magisterial capacity commit *me*, and I have not the slightest curiosity respecting the interior of Reading jail.—Besides he has literary sins enough of his own to answer for.

On your young and stalwart shoulders then it must perforce descend.—

That you may have the grace to bear this infliction with resignation, and never have the misfortune to incur a heavier one, is the sincere wish of

Your attached Friend,

THOMAS INGOLDSBY.

Tappington Everard,  
March 15, 1841.

## AVIS AU LECTEUR.

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RESPECTED SIR — or MADAM—(N, or M, as the case may be,)

IN laying before you this little piece of family biography, it does not escape me that to an “N. or M.” of your enlightened mind, a question may very naturally arise wherefore should I,—Thomas Ingoldsby,—throughout these Memoirs, describe myself under the *alias* of Charles Stafford?

My dear Sir — or Madam — the fact is that when, some seven years since, this veracious narrative first appeared in the pages of “Immortal Maga,”—a fly in amber, preserved only by the pellucid brilliance that surrounded it — I had reasons, as plenty as blackberries, for preserving a strict *incognito*.



# SOME ACCOUNT

OF

## MY COUSIN NICHOLAS.

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### CHAPTER I.

Oh, Love! Love! — Love is like a dizziness :—  
It winna let a pair body gang about his business.

*Old Song.*

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OF MY COUSIN NICHOLAS. — HIS BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND  
EDUCATION.—SHOWING HOW HE CAME TO BE BORN, AND  
HOW I CAME TO BE COUSIN TO MY COUSIN NICHOLAS. —  
OF MY COUSIN'S FROLICS, AND THEIR RESULT.

My Cousin Nicholas was the liveliest, the sprightliest, the handsomest, and the cleverest little fellow in the world—so said everybody, —at least everybody that visited at the Hall — and, “ what everybody says must be true.”

If there were any persons in the neighbouring village of a contrary opinion, they were

of that description which usually comes under the designation of Nobody—the Attorney, the Parson, and the Doctor, for instance ;—besides, as my Cousin seldom came in contact with either of these worthies without his genius effervescing in some juvenile prank at their expense, their opinions were naturally the offspring of prejudice, and, of course, the less to be relied on. As to my Uncle, he looked upon this issue of his loins with mingled love and reverence, and frequently swore—for my Uncle had contracted a bad habit of anathematizing—that “there was more wit in Nick’s little finger” than in the entire corporeal economy of the whole parish, including the Churchwardens and Overseer.

Whether my Uncle proceeded upon any particular hypothesis in thus determining the locality of my Cousin’s talents, must remain a matter of conjecture ; to those who favour the supposition that he did, it may afford no slight confirmation to observe that, Master Nicholas’s jokes being invariably of a practical description, it is far from improbable that

the seat of wit, in his particular instance — for one would not rashly oppugn a system in the abstract — lay rather in his fingers' ends than in the more recondite recesses of the pineal gland.

— To those who maintain that my Uncle never formed an hypothesis in his life, — I have nothing to say.

This exuberance of fancy in my Cousin was for ever exhibiting itself in a variety of shapes, and usually more to the surprise than the delectation of those who witnessed its career. Indeed, it must be confessed, that if wit, like all other good qualities, be, according to Aristotle's idea, a medium between two opposite extremes, my Cousin's certainly inclined rather to the *Hyperbole* than the *Elleipsis*, inasmuch as it seldom happened but that, in the opinion of some one or other, he "carried the joke a little too far."

The education received by this hopeful heir of "an ancient and respectable family," was one commensurate with his abilities, and, in its earlier stages at least, admirably adapted to bring talents like his to their full maturity.

His father, Sir Oliver Bullwinkle, or, as he loved to write it, Bolevaincle, was the highest blossom of the genealogical tree which hung in his study, (a room so designated, *æ non studeo*,) and shot up into a variety of luxuriant and overhanging branches from a root coeval with the Norman Conqueror, among whose more immediate attendants stood proudly eminent the name of Sir Roger de Bolevaincle.

This worthy Paladin performed, it seems, such good service at the battle of Hastings and elsewhere, that he was, like many others, his brave compeers and co-mates in arms, rewarded by his victorious master, when at length securely seated on the throne of these realms, with the grant of a castle and a lordship, the forfeited fief of some outlawed Saxon noble. Such, at least was the account frequently given by Sir Oliver to that most patient of all possible auditors, Captain Pyefinch; and if the style and title of his illustrious ancestor, through some unaccountable neglect, are not to be found either in Domesday Book, or the Roll of Battle Abbey, so trifling a circumstance can scarcely



impeach the credit due to an historical truth, in all other respects so well authenticated. Sir Oliver would have made an affidavit of the fact in any court in Christendom.

The castle, it is true, had long since mouldered into dust,—“*perierant etiam ruinæ!*”—nor did a single stone remain to tell on what precise spot of the domain the feudal habitation of the valiant and venerated Roger had existed, or, indeed, whether it had ever existed at all. Not so with the estate,—the “dirty acres,”—as Sir Lucius O’Trigger somewhat disparagingly calls them,—the rich arable land and the luxuriant pastures, the homesteads, the copses, the majestic oaks, many of which might, from their appearance, have afforded a grateful shade to the renowned progenitor of the family,—these still continued unimpaired in beauty and much increased in value, while to the possession of them the present representative of the race was, perhaps, as much indebted for the respect and precedence yielded him at the Quarter Sessions, as to the long list of illustrious Bullwinkles who had jointly and severally contributed to produce him.

But if the pride of ancestry were among the most conspicuous foibles of Sir Oliver, it was by no means so predominant as to repress in him the inclination to associate with others, his neighbours, less fortunate in their descent. His exalted birth, like the vaunted prerogative of the first James, was rather a theme on which its possessor loved to descant, than a principle to influence his actions; and the worthy Baronet's affability, especially to his grooms and gamekeepers, was even proverbial in the vicinity; nor was it long before Cupid, that most radical of levellers, who, as my Lord Grizzle so truly observes,

“Lords down to cellars bears,  
And bids the brawny porter walk up stairs,”

exerted his equalizing influence on Sir Oliver, and convinced the most incredulous that the heart of his new votary was even more susceptible of love than alive to dignity.

The day had been cold, boisterous, and raw, the country deep and miry, while Reynard, taking advantage of all these circumstances in his favour, had led his pursuers a rather longer

round than usual. The Baronet reached his home, after an unsuccessful chase, chilled, wet, and weary; the length of his ride had occasioned a proportionate increase of appetite, and as the readiest way of getting rid at once of two such uncomfortable sensations as cold and hunger, or rather, perhaps, governed by that ruling chance which so often decides the fate of mortals, he declined the splendid glories of the saloon for the more genial comforts of the kitchen fire.

The ample grate blazed bright and cheerful; one end of it was occupied by — the Cook!! — in the very act of subjecting a most delicious rump-steak to the discipline of St. Laurence, — the flame reflected her glowing beauties to the oblique glances of her master, while the other extremity of the range administered the most vivifying warmth to his inmost recesses, as, with the skirts of his hunting-frock duly subducted and restrained by each encircling arm, he exposed to the fire that particular portion of the human frame which it is considered equally indecorous to present to a friend or an enemy.

Eleanor Skillet was round, plump, and,—at this moment especially,—rosy ; and Cupid, who is seldom very dilatory in his proceedings, did Sir Oliver's business in the frying of an onion. Seating himself (somewhat too suddenly for his comfort) in a huge arm-chair, the ruggedness of whose wicker bottom was much at variance with the yielding softness of the cushion that usually supported his august person, the enamoured son of Nimrod, like another great man in a similar predicament,

“ Sighed and *ate*,  
Sighed and *ate*,  
Sighed and *ate*, and sighed again.”

Nor did the impression made by the winning graces of the buxom cook-maid prove a mere transitory fancy ; in the parlour, in the field, or the bed-chamber, despite the distractive cry of the dogs, or the notes of what bachelors call the “ merry-toned horn,” her image failed not from this hour to present itself to his imagination ; it even broke his rest, and it is a well-authenticated fact, that during the three successive

nights which immediately followed the culinary expedition alluded to, the most nervous person in the world might have reposed tranquilly in any chamber on the same side of the house with Sir Oliver, without having his slumbers invaded by the deep-toned bass of that gentleman's nasal organ.

The Baronet, having once imbibed this master passion, was not a man to be long deterred, by any of that *mauvaise honte*, that distressing timidity which too often prolongs most unnecessarily the sufferings of impassioned swains, from making his ardent wishes known to the fair object that inspired them; indeed, it has been shrewdly conjectured, that the extraordinary wakefulness of the three preceding nights was the effect of consideration rather than of uneasiness, and had been produced rather by the operation of duly weighing within himself the "To be, or not to be?" than by any apprehension for the final miscarriage of his suit, should reflection eventually induce him to decide in the affirmative.

Of the precise nature of his original proposals,

various were the surmises and reports current among the neighbours ; certain it is, that four months after the decisive interview with Miss Skillet in the Hall kitchen,

—— “ to the nuptial bower  
He led her, nothing loath,”

and received at the altar of the parish church of Underdown, the hand of the fair and lively Nelly, who, in something less than half a year afterwards, — being, as she averred, much alarmed by the noise and shouting of the rabble as she passed in her coach through a fair held on the village green,—presented him with a very fine little boy, marked on the back with a penny trumpet.

The robust and healthy appearance of the infant, introduced thus prematurely into the Hall, gave rise to many an admiring shrug, and many a sagacious shake of the head ; often too would a trifling elevation of the shoulders, accompanied by a corresponding dropping of the eyelids, take place as the young heir of the Bullwinkles was exhibited to the occasional inspection of the gossips of Underdown ; and

many a significant tone as well as gesture, intended to convey much more than met the eye or the ear, accompanied the communication of the birth of the hero of these memoirs to his aunt, the sister of Sir Oliver, and mother to the humble biographer by whose unpractised pen this eventful history remains to be commemorated.

This lady, on the marriage of her brother, had retired from Underdown Hall, feeling, and, indeed, expressing great indignation at the contamination caused by the hitherto unsullied stream of the blood of the Bullwinkles becoming thus intimately commingled with the plebeian puddle which stagnated in the veins of Nelly Skillet. Vain were all the remonstrances of her brother, who probably conceived that the aforesaid stream was infinitely too pure to admit the possibility of pollution, but that its clear current, like that of the majestic Rhone, must still flow on, undefiled by the accession of any meaner waters, which, though rolling in the same channel, it disdains to mix with, or to admit into its bosom. His utmost efforts did not avail to detain her one moment in the ancient

seat of her ancestors, thus desecrated, as she conceived, by the reception of so ignoble a mistress. She accordingly quitted the Hall on the day previous to the celebration of these inauspicious nuptials, proceeding to the house of an old friend and schoolfellow. By this lady, the wife of a wealthy commoner in an adjoining county, she was most cordially received, and her inmate she continued till her own union with Major Stafford, the younger brother of a good family, to whom she had been long and tenderly attached, an event certainly accelerated by the circumstance which occasioned her secession from her brother's roof.

Major Stafford was, as I have already hinted, of high unblemished lineage; but fortune in bestowing this mark of her good-will upon him, had exhausted all her favours, and denied him that portion of the good things of this world so necessary to secure to rank the respect it claims. He was what is commonly called "a soldier of fortune," that is to say, a soldier of *no* fortune,—but John Bull is peculiarly felicitous in misnomers of this kind. The man who



demands payment under a threat of arrest he terms a "Solicitor," names a cinder-heap in the suburbs "Mount Pleasant," and calls a well-known piece of water the "Serpentine River," because it is *not* a river, and because it is *not* serpentine.

The Major possessed little more than a high sense of honour, a generous and noble heart, a handsome person, his commission, and his sword. He was, in fact, the junior of three brothers: the elder, Lord Manningham, a General in the army, and at the period of which I am speaking, on foreign service, was a married man with a family; the second, the Honourable Augustus Stafford, who was fast rising into eminence in his profession as a barrister, remained a bachelor; while Charles, the youngest, having felt no decided inclination for the Church, to which he had been originally destined, had resolved to enter the army, and with his sword carve out his way to that distinction which his lofty spirit panted to attain. My mother's fortune, though little more than six thousand pounds, added to the income derived from his

commission, enabled them to live in comfort if not in splendour, till the birth of myself, their first and, as it eventually proved, their only child, and left, to dispositions happy and contented as theirs, little else on earth to be desired. I was six years old when this state of calm felicity was broken in upon by the regiment to which my father belonged being ordered abroad. The demon of discord had again unfurled the standard of war, and my father, now Colonel Stafford, was forced to obey the rude summons which tore him from the arms of his wife and child to encounter all the inconveniences and hazards of the tented field.

Lady Nelly, meanwhile, in the full possession of all that wealth and finery, which, when in single blessedness, she had been accustomed to consider as rivalling the joys of Elysium, did not find her sanguine anticipations altogether realized by the event which had put these objects of her eager wishes so unexpectedly within her grasp. True that, instead of cooking an excellent dinner for others, she had now only to undergo the fatigue of eating it herself; — that

London Particular Madeira, and an occasional sip of the best Cogniac, had superseded Barclay's Entire, egg-hot, and gin-twist; that the woollen apron, muslin cap, and pattens, had fled before flounces and furbelows, a yellow silk turban with a bird of Paradise to match, and a barouche and four:—nevertheless many things were still wanting to complete her happiness, while many circumstances were daily occurring to render her situation irksome and uncomfortable in the extreme.

The new Lady Bullwinkle was by nature of a social disposition, and finding little to amuse or interest her in the few ladies of the neighbouring gentry, who, from electioneering motives, were induced by their husbands to leave their cards at her residence, she sighed in secret for the less dignified but more enlivening entertainments of that servants' hall which she had so rashly abandoned. She still infinitely preferred a game at " Hunt the Slipper," or the mystic rites of the Christmas mistletoe, to all the more refined methods of killing time, practised by ladies of the rank in life to which

she was now elevated. This, her ruling propensity, however, she yet contrived sometimes to indulge, especially after the birth of my Cousin Nicholas, whose infantine wants frequently furnished her with an excuse for a descent to the lower regions; while, during the occasional absence of Sir Oliver, she was in the constant habit of witnessing, and to a certain extent joining with "Little Master" in, the merry pranks and facetious conceits of the parti-coloured gentry and Abigails in the kitchen, who, sooth to say, particularly in those festive moments which mark the commencement and termination of the year, were much more encouraged by the condescension and the "largesse" of "My Lady," than awed by her authority or abashed at her presence.

In so excellent a school, a boy of the most inferior abilities could scarcely fail of picking up much useful and valuable information; it is therefore far from surprising that a youth of Nicholas's great natural parts and lively genius should, in a comparatively short period, make such a progress as to create surprise and ad-

miration, even in his instructors. At eight years old, my Cousin was the veriest wag in Christendom.—Besides being thoroughly initiated in the mysteries of “Put” and “All-Fours,” “Blindman’s Buff,” and “Threadle-my-needle,” the superiority of his talents had evinced itself in a vast variety of ways; he had put cow-itch into the maids’ beds, and brimstone into his father’s punch-bowl; crackers into the kitchen fire, and gunpowder into the parlour snuffers; nay, on one peculiarly felicitous opportunity, when the annual celebration of his own birth-day had collected a party in the great dining-room of Underdown Hall, he had contrived to fix a large bonnet-pin, so perpendicularly erect, in the cushion about to be occupied by the Reverend Dr. Stuffins, as to occasion much detriment and inconvenience to that learned gentleman, whose agility on the occasion would not have disgraced Mr. Ellar, or the “Flying Phenomenon.” In the course of the same eventful day, moreover, he subtracted a chair from the deciduous body of his papa’s “legal adviser,” — amputated the apothecary’s

pig-tail,—and, by the ingenious adaptation of a fishing-hook and line, previously passed through the pulley of a chandelier, elevated with a sudden jerk the flaxen jasey and redundant tresses, heretofore the *dulce decus* of Miss Kitty Pyefinch, to a situation emulating that of Mahomet's coffin.

For this last *jeu d'esprit* he was certainly reprimanded by his father with more of severity than he usually exhibited, Sir Oliver being penetrated with the most profound respect for the lady, the honours of whose brow had been thus wantonly invaded. Indeed, the confusion of the party was not a little increased by the vehement anathematizing of my Uncle, who, in the first transports of his indignation, so far forgot himself as to apply his foot, with a sudden and irresistible impetus, to that precise spot in my Cousin Nicholas's system of osteology which appeared the best adapted for its reception, it having completely escaped the worthy Baronet for the moment that the gout had for a little time past been coquetting with his own great toe, a circumstance which this

rash manœuvre brought at once most forcibly to his recollection.

Nicholas up to this comparatively advanced period of his existence had formed no more distinct idea of physical force, as applied to his own person, than that which he might have derived from the vague intimation afforded by his nurse-maid's muse as she occasionally caroled,

“Dance-y, Diddle-ey Mopsey !  
What shall I do with ye ?  
Set ye in lap  
And give ye some pap ?  
Or get a good rod and whip ye ?”

As the menacing alternative had never been resorted to, he was, of course, equally astonished and incensed at the very unexpected manner in which his endeavours to contribute to the amusement of the company had now for the first time been received ; he yelled like a Catabaw, and ran roaring down to the kitchen, whither he was followed by Lady Bullwinkle, with a countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

After the lapse of some half-an-hour, passed in administering her consolations to his wounded

spirit, her ladyship at length succeeded in assuaging the poignancy of his grief, and in somewhat softening the excess of his resentment; then having exacted from him a reluctant promise not to be comical any more that evening, she led him back to the parlour, apologizing, with a grace peculiarly her own, to the party, for the "sweet child's" having been "a little too funny." By the gentlemen her excuses were received with the most gratifying good-humour; but Miss Pyefinch was by no means inclined to extend the olive-branch so easily.

This lady was a poetess—her soul all tenderness, sentiment, sympathy, and feeling; of course, her nerves were sadly shattered by this attack, and she had hesitated for a moment as to the propriety of going into hysterics, but fortunately recollecting that the execution of such a measure would, in the present state of her head-dress, be far from advisable, she very considerably deferred taking so decisive a step till a more convenient opportunity should present itself, and gathering up her spoils, hastily retreated to compose an ode "To Sensi-



bility," in the course of which she took occasion to compare herself to Belinda, in the "Rape of the Lock," not omitting to cast a most Medusean glance on the offender, whom she encountered on the stairs in her retreat.

It would be tedious, not to say impossible, to recount the hundredth part of my Cousin Nicholas's brilliant sallies, of a similar description, that took place in the interval between this piece of pleasantry and an event which, for some time, had the effect of checking the ebullitions of his genius. This occurrence was the sudden death of his mother, Lady Bullwinkle, who having unluckily fallen from the top of the back stairs to the bottom, in consequence of treading on a few peas which my Cousin had placed there for the express purpose of giving one of the maids a tumble, broke an arm and a leg. When borne to her room, she positively refused to abide by the directions of Dr. Drench, who, as she shrewdly observed, "only wanted to starve her into taking his 'poticary's stuff." She resolved therefore to abide by a regimen prescribed by herself, in which roast-goose,

mock-turtle, and deviled-sweetbreads, were prominent articles. To this diet she rigidly adhered, seldom exceeding a pint of Madeira at a meal; but whether it was that the injuries received were in themselves so serious as to baffle the art of medicine, or that, as Dr. Drench never failed to aver, her whole system of living was radically wong, it somehow happened that a mortification ensued, which carried the poor lady off, within a fortnight after the accident.

## CHAPTER II.

The brave Roland ! the brave Roland !  
 False tidings reach'd the Rhenish strand  
     That he had fallen in fight !  
 And thy faithful bosom swoon'd with pain,  
 O loveliest maiden of Allemagne,  
     For the loss of thine own true knight !

*Old Song.*

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RECONCILIATION.—AULD LANG SYNE.—THE BLARNEY-STONE.  
 RETURN OF THE KILLED AND WOUNDED.—“HARK ! MORE  
 KNOCKING !”

SOME six months after the decease of Lady Bullwinkle, my mother once more returned to take up her residence at Underdown Hall.

Poor Sir Oliver, although he had not absolutely “forgot himself to stone” on the loss of his lady, whose charms, sooth to say, had long since declined very much in his estimation, was nevertheless seriously inconvenienced by her decease.

The cares of housekeeping, to which he had never in his life been accustomed, were heavy and grievous. Previous to taking upon himself the rosy fetters of Hymen, his household affairs had been conducted by his sister, whose prudent management he had somewhat missed on the keys of office being transferred to his late lady; but when she too was called upon, though under different circumstances, to retire from the seat of government, his situation was lamentable indeed. The affairs of the home department got into sad disorder; the servants, he said,—nay, swore,—were worse plagues than any which infested Egypt of old;—over the men, indeed, he did with great difficulty preserve some little supremacy, but the women——! No, he must positively call in some more practised and efficient hand than his own to seize the helm and steer his labouring bark amidst the rocks and quicksands by which it was on all sides surrounded.

Two schemes especially offered themselves to his election;—the one, to make advances to his sister, whose husband was now in the Peninsula,

having left her in furnished lodgings in London ; —the other, to raise Miss Pyefinch to the vacant throne. — Pride and shame rendered him averse from the first measure ; besides which, he was by no means certain that Mrs. Stafford would extend the olive branch and come into his terms ; while a fearful awe of Miss Kitty's talents, and no very great inclination for her person, (which certainly bore little or no resemblance to the "statue that enchants the world,") threw serious obstacles in the way of his second expedient. It is true that Captain Pyefinch, her brother, an invalid officer on half-pay, was a great proficient in the noble science of backgammon, and moreover very excellent company, seldom interrupting the most long-winded of the Baronet's stories by any remarks of his own, which, of Spartan brevity, "few and far between," just served to convince his entertainer that his narratives were not thrown away on the listless ear of an unobservant or a somnolent auditor. The society of this interesting veteran would by the proposed match

be at once converted from a casual good into a permanent blessing ; but then the Lady——

For Miss Catharine Pyfinch, a maiden who owned to six-and-thirty, the worthy Baronet felt, it is certain, the greatest reverence and respect ; but then reverence and respect are not precisely the sensations with which a hale widower, in Sir Oliver's circumstances, would wish to be wholly and entirely penetrated towards the proposed partner of his bed and fortune. In the first place, her learning was so transcendent that his own faculties were often bewildered in the vain attempt to unravel the meaning of her commonest expressions ; then her sensibility was so exquisite, that if by chance, during her visits at the Hall, Sir Oliver found it advisable to horsewhip a refractory pointer, or kick an intruding cat out of the parlour, the scene never failed to overcome her ; and if, which was too frequently the case, an unlucky oath would slide out of the wrong corner of his mouth in her presence, the shock was electrical, and rendered her completely *hors de combat* for the rest of the day.

With all this, the Baronet had a high opinion of the good sense which enabled her to discover so many excellent qualities in himself; since, though she constantly assured him that they were open and visible to all mankind, still, with every disposition in the world to credit her, he could not, from the silence of every body else upon the subject, but entertain some doubts whether these said excellences were altogether so obvious to others as her own fine perception induced her to imagine. Then, again, her verses were so delightful;—not that Sir Oliver piqued himself upon his taste for poetry, which, sooth to say, had usually a narcotic effect upon him, but her glowing muse painted so exquisitely the noble actions of the renowned Sir Roger, the sage decrees of the learned Sir Marmaduke (a Whig justice of the peace in the reign of Queen Anne, whose portrait adorned the mantel-piece in the principal saloon), and the innumerable virtues of the whole race of Bullwinkle, that, even without the well-merited eulogium on the existing representative of that dignified family, Morpheus himself must have

thrown away his poppies, and hung on the recital with all the vigilance of the most insomnolent mouser.

Nevertheless, though the Baronet's ears were tickled, and his vanity gratified, his heart was not subdued: and wisely reflecting that there was little apprehension of losing the Captain's society, as he could not call to recollection that the gentleman had ever declined one single invitation to the Hall, or had hesitated to prolong his stay, when there, on the slightest intimation that such an extension would be agreeable to its inmates—remembering, too, that there was no reason to suppose Miss Kitty would cease to immortalize the glories of the family, though she were never to become herself a member of it—loath, moreover, to part so soon with his newly acquired liberty—he finally decided, one eventful evening, after losing eight successive hits to the Captain, and being somewhat annoyed by an incautious expression of the lady's aversion to tobacco, on writing to Mrs. Stafford, proposing a cessation of hostilities, and requesting her to resume that station



at the head of his household which his unadvised nuptials had formerly induced her to renounce. Rome was not finished in a day, neither was Sir Oliver's epistle ; both, however, were, after much toil and labour, completed, and the old butler was despatched to Upper Seymour Street, with the letter which had been so long in the concocting, and which he faithfully delivered into Mrs. Stafford's own hands.

My mother was surprised, and a little agitated on perusing its contents. Years had elapsed since she had quitted her paternal roof, without any expectation of revisiting it again ; but the cause which had banished her thence was now removed, and a feeling, easily conceived, gave her a strong inclination to behold once more those scenes, which, in her early youth, had been her home,—her world. Habit and education had indeed combined to estrange her from her brother, more than is usual between members of the same family, even before his ill-assorted marriage ; still a sincere, if not a very ardent, affection had ever filled her mind towards him ; and, though somewhat quenched

by the unfavourable circumstance alluded to, it was by no means extinguished, and she could not but confess to herself, that a reconciliation with him would be most grateful to her. Superadded to this, motives of economy spoke trumpet-tongued in favour of the measure. I was now at Westminster school, my father engaged in all the perilous scenes of a dangerous and doubtful war. The Honourable Augustus Stafford had lately departed this life, and having long since quarrelled with his younger brother, who had warmly resented some slighting expressions used by him relative to the marriage with my mother, had bequeathed whatever property he possessed to Lord Manningham, who still retained his government in the East. Should any unfortunate event occur to deprive me of a father, Underdown Hall would be a secure asylum for us both; while even at present, with the very limited income she was able to command, and the consciousness that all my hopes of a competency must rest upon her ability to save from her own expenses, it was a retreat pointed out to her as well by prudence

as inclination—at all events till the period of Colonel Stafford's return.

My mother was not long in resolving to accept her brother's invitation thus conveyed, and a communication to that effect speedily transmitted to my uncle the pleasing intelligence, that the proffered olive branch was accepted, while it fixed a day for his long-estranged sister's reappearance at the Hall. Thither, in fact, after taking a most affectionate leave of me, she repaired at the appointed time; as much, I believe, to the discomfiture of Miss Pyefinch, as to the real joy of Sir Oliver, who after he had got over the little awkwardness of their first interview, scrupled not to declare that he had not felt himself so thoroughly comfortable since their separation.

For myself, I must own I was by no means pleased with my mother's new arrangements, especially when in the ensuing vacation I went down to spend my six weeks' holiday at the Hall. It is true the frank good-humour of my uncle, and the evident pleasure he took in seeing me, soon won my regard in spite of his peculiarities;

but—I did not like the Captain;—I did not like Miss Kitty, who had, however, contrived to make a friend of my mother, and was fast rising in her good graces in proportion as she declined in those of Sir Oliver.

This lady's conduct had indeed undergone a considerable alteration since Mrs. Stafford's arrival. Her Muse was still prolific, but it was no longer the panegyric of the house of Bullwinkle that formed its exclusive theme. The Baronet was no longer its object; all the poetic artillery of the fair Sappho was now levelled at my mother. She sung of the delightful union of two sensitive souls, and the charms of female friendship.—My mother smiled.—She changed her strain to a recapitulation of all Mrs. Stafford's admirable qualities, attributing to her the excess of every virtue under the sun.—My mother frowned. She shifted her ground once more. The subject alike of her lays and her discourse was now the praises and merits of the gallant soldier, who, amidst dangers, difficulties, and death, still thought with fondness on the only object of his affections, and panted

for the hour when, his perilous duties all fulfilled, the pains of absence should be more than balanced by the transports of a joyful return to the embraces of his beloved.—My mother's flint began to melt, and an affection for me as violent as instantaneous, which seized the good lady the moment I was introduced to her acquaintance, completed her conquest;—Miss Pyefinch “had never seen so fine or so engaging a boy;” and before that day was over, Mrs. Stafford hesitated not to affirm that “Miss Pyefinch was really a very sensible woman, and possessed one of the best hearts in the world.”

Sir Oliver whistled, and left the room, muttering something in an under-tone, which, from the only monosyllable that could be distinctly heard, related in all likelihood to a female greyhound that followed him out of the parlour.

Despite the *encomia* with which I was overwhelmed by her, I cannot say that the manners of my new friend made a very favourable impression upon me; nay, I must own that with respect to my Cousin Nicholas, (whom, by the way, I have too long neglected,) my temper was

even more fastidious. In vain did that facetious young gentleman exhibit some of the choicest specimens of his wit for my entertainment; in vain were the most jocose feats of practical ingenuity, feats which convulsed all the grooms and footmen in the house with laughter, brought forward to amuse me; in vain did he tie the wheel of a post-chaise, which had drawn up at a door in the village, to one of the legs of an adjacent fruit-stall, and occasion in consequence a most ludicrous subversion of the fragile fabric on the sudden movement of the vehicle, to the utter consternation of a profane old apple-woman, who loaded the unknown malefactor with her bitterest execrations;—in vain did he even exercise his humour on my own person, putting drugs of a cathartic quality into my soup, or removing the linch-pins from a pony-chaise which I was fond of driving about the grounds, and thereby occasioning me an unexpected descent from my triumphal car, accomplished with far more of precipitation than grace—still I was so weak as to remain in-

sensible to his merit, and even to look upon these sprightly sallies with some degree of anger and indignation. I have little doubt but that I must have appeared to him a very dull dog, and should in all probability have soon incurred his supreme contempt, but for an event which, I have since had reason to imagine, changed in some degree the nature of his feelings towards me.

The last accounts from Spain had stated the approximation of the two contending armies, and the public journals did not hesitate to speculate on the probability of an approaching engagement. These conjectures derived much additional strength from the contents of private despatches, and, among others, of letters received by my mother from her husband, who from his situation on Lord ——'s staff, had good grounds for supposing such a circumstance to be very likely to take place. My mother's anxiety was, of course, extreme; nor could I fail to partake of the same feelings, when one morning, the rest of the family being already

assembled at breakfast, my Cousin Nicholas, who was usually later than any other of the party, entered the room.

His countenance, unlike its usual expression, was serious, and even solemn; his step slow and hesitating, while a degree of disorder was visible in his whole demeanour. He took his seat at the breakfast table in silence, and began to occupy himself with his tea-cup, bending down his head, as if with the intention of shading his countenance from the observation of the company. My uncle at this moment inquired for the newspaper, the invariable concomitant of his morning meal, and was answered by the butler that he had placed it on the table as usual, before any of the family had come down, except Mr. Bullwinkle, whom he thought he had seen engaged in its perusal.

“And, pray, Mr. Nick, what have you done with it?” cried Sir Oliver. “I did not know you had been up so early.”

“Done with it, sir?” stammered my Cousin. —“Nothing, sir,—that is, nothing particular. I have left it in my own room, I dare say; I can



fetch it, if you wish me, sir,—that is—but, perhaps, you will like to read it after breakfast?”—and his eye glanced significantly towards my mother.

Its expression was not to be mistaken.—She caught the alarm instantly, and rising from her chair, while her trembling limbs scarce sufficed to bear her weight, and her face turned ashy pale, exclaimed, “There is news from Spain! I am sure of it—and Stafford is killed!”

Her words were electrical, and a simultaneous conviction of their truth blanched every cheek.

“Killed!” returned my Cousin Nicholas—“No, my dear aunt—that is,—I hope not; but—there has been an action,—a severe one, and it is as well to be prepared—”

Mrs. Stafford’s worst fears were confirmed; she fainted, and was carried from the room. In the confusion of the moment, no one thought of inquiring into the sad particulars of the disaster that had overwhelmed us. Sir Oliver first asked the question, and demanded to see the fatal paper. My Cousin immediately com-

plied with the requisition, and produced it from his pocket ; saying coolly, as he put it into his father's hand, that " he was sorry to see his aunt so discomposed, as his uncle Stafford might not, after all, be killed,—or even wounded, as his name certainly was not in the list of either the one or the other."

" Not in the list !" roared Sir Oliver. " Then what the d—l did you mean, you young rascal, by alarming us all in this manner?" and stood with an expression of countenance in which joy, surprise, and anger, were most ludicrously commingled ; while I, as the conviction, that my ingenious Cousin had merely been once more indulging his taste for pleasantry, flashed upon my mind, sprang forward in the heat of my indignation, and with a tolerably well-directed blow of my arm levelled that jocose young gentleman with the floor.

A yell, shrill and piercing as that of the fabled mandrake when torn by the hand of violence from its parent earth, accompanied his prostration, and the ill-concealed triumph which had begun to sparkle in his eye at the success

of his stratagem, gave way to a strong appearance of disgust at this forcible appeal to his feelings. But Sir Oliver, with all his partiality for his heir, was at this moment too angry to take up his cause; he ordered him instantly out of the room, while I hurried off to console my mother with the intelligence that the fears she had been so cruelly subjected to were altogether groundless, and that the affair, to use a frequent and favourite phrase of my Cousin Nicholas, was "nothing but a jolly good hoax from beginning to end."

## CHAPTER III.

A doubtful fate the soldier tries  
 Who joins the gallant quarrel—  
 Perhaps on the cold ground he lies,  
 No wife, no friend, to close his eyes,  
 Or, vainly mourn'd,  
 Perhaps return'd,  
 He's crown'd with victory's laurel

DIBDIN.

——— Facilis descensus Averni;  
 Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,  
 Hoc opus, hic labor est!—VIRG.

PENITENCE AND ITS FRUITS.—THE MORE HASTE THE WORSE  
 SPEED.—THE HORSE AND HIS RIDER.

I FOUND my mother still suffering severely under the impression that the blood of her beloved husband had mingled with that of many of his brave countrymen in crimsoning the plains of Talavera. Painful as it was to witness her distress, I almost dreaded to inform her that she had been imposed upon, lest the

sudden transition from despair to extreme joy, on finding her apprehensions for his safety entirely groundless, should prove too much for her agitated mind, and plunge her perhaps into a situation still more to be dreaded than that state of insensibility from which she was now beginning slowly to emerge.

Fortunately, while I was yet meditating on the best method of conveying the happy news to her with the caution it required, Dr. Drench was ushered into the apartment. The worthy old butler, on seeing the condition in which his mistress had been borne from the breakfast parlour, had hurried, unbidden, in search of that gentleman's assistance, and had luckily found him at his own house, which was situate scarcely a hundred yards distant from the avenue leading to the Hall. When he arrived, the good doctor was in the very act of mounting his galloway, a tight little Suffolk punch of more "bone" than "mettle," in order to pay a visit to a patient. Of course no persuasion was necessary, under the circumstances, to induce him to alter his route for the present; and,

having stored his pockets with a profusion of the usual restoratives, a very few minutes brought him to Mrs. Stafford's bed-side. Taking him aside to the window, I, in as few words as possible, recounted to him the cause of my mother's sudden indisposition, together with the real state of the case, the assurance of which would, I was persuaded, prove the most effectual remedy for her disorder; then leaving it to his discretion to announce the glad tidings in the manner most befitting the occasion, I retired from the room. The worthy doctor, not being blessed with a very keen relish for the ridiculous, was at first a good deal shocked at my narration, and, in the simplicity of his heart, cursed my Cousin Nicholas for "a mischievous young cub," but then, it may be observed in palliation, that Drench was but a plain man, with very little taste for humour. By his care and skill, however, together with the judicious way in which he communicated to his patient, after a free use of the lancet, the information which had indeed nearly again overwhelmed her, such beneficial effects were produced as to warrant him, on joining us in

the parlour below, in holding out the strongest hopes that no ulterior consequences of a more serious or unpleasant nature would attend the execution of my Cousin's frolic.

Sir Oliver pressed the doctor strongly to stay and partake of our family dinner; this invitation, however, frankly as it was proffered, he thought fit most positively to decline. Indeed, ever since the surreptitious abduction of his queue, which had taken place on the memorable occasion of the party formerly mentioned, he had been rather shy of committing his person within the four walls of Underdown Hall, except under circumstances of professional emergency. He had by this time, after infinite care and pains, succeeded in rearing another pigtail to a size and longitude nearly coequal with those of its lamented predecessor. It was once again *totus teres atque rotundus*, and its proprietor was therefore, not without reason, especially apprehensive lest the scissors of my Cousin Nicholas, scarcely less fatal than those of the Parcæ, might once more subject this cherished appendage to the unpleasant ceremony of a divorce. Despite, therefore, the Circæan allurements of a

fine haunch of forest mutton, his favourite joint, Dr. Drench shook me cordially by the hand, bowed to Sir Oliver and the Captain, and quitted the house.

My uncle, whose love and regard for his sister, always sincere, were, perhaps, greater at this than at any former period of his life, was truly rejoiced to find that no seriously unpleasant effects were likely to ensue from what, now his apprehensions were allayed, he again began to consider as a pardonable, though somewhat too lively ebullition of youthful vivacity; he had even begun to explain to the Captain, for the five hundredth time, what a *desideratum* it was that a boy should have a little mischief, — a “little spice of the d—l,” as he phrased it, — “in him;” the Captain, in no wise relaxing from his customary taciturnity, was very composedly occupying himself in arranging the men upon the backgammon board, and neither assented nor demurred to a proposition which he had so often heard laid down by his host before; while I, in that restless, fidgety state of mind which one feels when subsiding agitation has not yet quite sunk



into composure, was endeavouring to divert the unpleasant current of my thoughts, by turning over the leaves of the last new novel, brought by Miss Kitty Pyefinch from the circulating library at Underdown, when a strange medley of voices and confusion of sounds, portending some new calamity, and proceeding from the outward hall, arrested my attention, caused even the imperturbable Captain to raise his eyes from his game, and drew from Sir Oliver Bullwinkle the abrupt exclamation,—“What the devil’s that !”

The sounds evidently and rapidly approached ; in a few seconds the parlour door flew open, and a figure, which, by its general outline only, could be recognised as that of Drench, occupied the vacant space, while the background of the picture was filled up by an assemblage of sundry domestics, bearing clothes-brushes, and rubbers of various descriptions, and exhibiting a set of countenances, in every one of which, respect, and a strong inclination to risibility, manifestly contended for the mastery.

The unexpected appearance of such a phe-

nomenon excited scarcely less surprise and astonishment in my own mind than in that of Sir Oliver, who stood gazing on the apparition with symptoms of the most undisguised amazement, till a voice, broken by passion, and impeded by the mud, which filled the mouth of the speaker, stammered out—

“Look here, Sir Oliver! I beg you will look here—this is another of the tricks of your precious son Nicholas—his behaviour is unbearable, he is a pest to the whole neighbourhood, Sir Oliver.”

“Why, what on earth is all this about? What is the matter, my good friend?”—

“Matter?—the devil’s the matter—almost dislocating my neck’s the matter. I am a plain man, Sir Oliver”—no one who looked in poor Drench’s face could gainsay the assertion—“I am a plain man, and I now tell you plainly, that if you do not curb that young man’s propensity to mischief, some time or other he will come to be hanged—only see what a pickle I am in!”

The last sentence was uttered in a lachry-

mose whine, so different from the highly-raised tone in which the former part of the invective had been pronounced, that my uncle, who had begun to bristle at hearing the lineal heir of Sir Roger de Bullwinkle consigned thus unceremoniously to the superintendance of Mr. Ketch, was immediately mollified, and his attention being thus pointedly attracted to the rueful appearance exhibited by the Doctor, his anger was forthwith subdued. Dr. Drench was a little punchy figure of a man, standing about five feet nothing, plump and round as a pill; he was placed opposite to Sir Oliver, dilating his height to the very utmost, and if he did not on this occasion add a cubit to his stature, it was manifestly from sheer inability, and not from any want of inclination; his snuff-coloured coat, black silk waistcoat, kerseymeres, and "continuations," no longer boasted that unsullied purity, in all the pride of which they had quitted Underdown Hall, not half an hour before; a thick incrustation of dark blue mud, agreeably relieved by spots of the most vivid crimson, now covered them with plastic tena-

city, rendering their original tints scarcely discernible by the most microscopic eye. Nor had the visage of the unfortunate gentleman escaped much better, since, but for the sanguine current which flowed down the lower part of his face in a double stream, he might not unaptly have been compared to the "Man with the Iron Mask," so completely had the aforesaid incrustation adapted itself to the contour of his features.

If Pope's assertion be correct, when, following Ariosto, he pronounces that all things lost on earth are treasured in the moon, the Doctor's well-brushed beaver was, in all probability, by this time safely laid up in that poetic repository of missing chattels, for below it was unquestionably nowhere to be found; its place, however, was supplied by a cap of the same adhesive material as that which decorated his face and habiliments, affording strong presumptive evidence that whatever portion of his person had first emerged from the ditch he had so lately evacuated, his head had at all events taken precedence on his entry into it. His pig-tail, too, that darling object

of his fondest affection, to guard whose sacred hairs from the remotest chance of violation, he had so reluctantly declined the Baronet's proffered cheer, stood forth no longer a splendid specimen of the skill of Humphrey Williams, sole *friseur* to the village of Underdown, but now exhibited, indeed, a melancholy resemblance to the real appendage of that unclean animal from which it had metaphorically derived its designation.

Rueful, indeed, was the aspect of the worthy disciple of Galen, as he underwent the scrutinizing gaze of Sir Oliver, who found it very convenient at the same time to have recourse to a family snuff-box which he usually carried about his person; in this mode of proceeding he was imitated by the Captain, who now for the first time broke silence to request the favour of a pinch from the well-known *tabatière*, after which a more specific inquiry was instituted into the predisposing and proximate causes of Dr. Drench's disaster.

Those causes were, alas! but too soon made manifest.

My Cousin Nicholas, it seems, had encountered the Doctor at the Hall door on his return; and had stopped him to make inquiries respecting the health of his patient, whose indisposition he vehemently deplored, uttering a thousand regrets that a silly joke of his own should have produced it. For this he declared he should never be able to forgive himself, although, as he protested, it had never entered his imagination that the trick could have been attended with consequences so alarming. Touched by his remorse, the good Doctor comforted him with the information that, if nothing occurred to produce a relapse, his aunt would not, he trusted, be so serious a sufferer as he had at first feared; he then seized the opportunity to read his young penitent a short but energetic lecture on the folly and wickedness (so he expressed himself) of thus terrifying, or even inconveniencing others, merely to gratify a silly and mischievous propensity.

My Cousin Nicholas listened to these well-intended and well-delivered observations with the profoundest attention; he heaved a sigh

at their conclusion, and with a becoming gravity assented to their justice, at the same time volunteering a promise that this offence should be his last. Pleased with the effect of his own oratory, and nothing doubting that the contrition of the youthful offender was, for the moment at least, sincere, Dr. Drench put one foot into the stirrup attached to his gallows, which a groom had now led out, and throwing his leg over the saddle, failed to remark that his proselyte had taken the opportunity afforded by his back being turned for the nonce, to introduce a large thistle beneath the tail of the quadruped on whose back he had now attained so perilous an elevation.

The effect was obvious and immediate: utterly unaccustomed to any application of a similar description, and highly resenting the indignity thus offered to his person, Punch, as sober a gelding as any in the three kingdoms, instantly evinced his sense of the degradation to which he had been subjected, by violent and repeated calcitrations, of no common altitude, and distributed in every possible direction. Becoming

every moment more eager to relieve himself from so disgraceful and inconvenient an adjunct as that which now encumbered and annoyed his rear, he at length took the resolution of starting off at score, and soon deviated so much from his usually rectilinear mode of progression as to convey his unfortunate rider to the edge of a large sewer, into which all the filth and drainings of the Hall stables, together with other not less noisome concomitants, eventually flowed. Here, on the very brink of this abyss, an unlucky curvet, describing an angle of forty-five degrees, dismounted the hapless equestrian, and precipitated him head foremost into the centre of the "vast profound."

But for the groom, who had brought the Doctor his horse, and who had witnessed the whole of the foregoing scene, poor Dr. Drench would probably have encountered a fate compared with which the not altogether dissimilar end of the "Young princes murder'd in the Tower" might have been esteemed a merciful dispensation, since, whether we subscribe to Walpole's "Doubts" or not, there is no rea-



son to imagine that the means employed for the suffocation of the Royal innocents was attended by that “rank compound of villanous smells” which served, in the present case, to heighten the catastrophe. By his assistance the sufferer was, with some difficulty, extricated from the imminent peril into which he had been plunged, and was reconducted to the Hall, whither he once more repaired for the double purpose of complaint and depuration.

These particulars were, not without some little trouble, at length collected from the soiled lips of the indignant Doctor, and confirmed by the supplementary attestation of the servant who had observed the transaction, and whose levity in giving his evidence—the fellow absolutely grinned—drew down upon him a well-merited rebuke from the Court. A summons was instantly despatched, commanding the immediate attendance of the accused,—but my Cousin Nicholas was at this precise moment nowhere to be found.

That considerate young gentleman, on witnessing the “Descent of Drench,” being well

aware that liberty unexpectedly recovered is, in nine instances out of ten, abused, and most apt to degenerate into licentiousness, hastily followed the enfranchised steed, with the view of preventing any mischief which might accrue to himself or others from this his sudden manumission. The end of the avenue, which opened on the high-road near to the entrance of the village of Underdown, presented a formidable barrier to the farther progress of the liberated nag in the shape of a lofty gate, flanked on each side by a thick plantation of evergreens. To leap it was out of the question, as poor Punch held fox-hunting in utter abomination, and had never cleared anything more formidable than a gutter in his life;—to escape on either side was impossible,—the shrubs were absolutely impervious; so, having discovered during a moment of hesitation what the headlong precipitation of his flight had hitherto prevented him from perceiving, namely, that he had long since got rid of his old tormentor, the thistle,—all these considerations, joined with the recollection that he had neither galloped so long nor

so fast at any one time during the last fourteen years, induced the philosophic Punch to await quietly my Cousin's approach, and once more to surrender his newly-acquired freedom without making a single struggle to retain it.

Having thus possessed himself of a horse, my Cousin Nicholas thought he would take a ride.

Many reasons concurred to render his availing himself of the opportunity particularly advisable:—in the first place, horse-exercise is strongly recommended by the faculty, and has a tendency towards bracing the nerves;—then it happened to be a remarkably fine day;—inclination prompted, opportunity courted him, and he was, moreover, morally certain, from the situation in which he had last beheld him, that the owner of his Pegasus stood in no sort of need of him at present;—in addition to all which, an undefined suspicion had by this time entered my Cousin's head, that certain disputatious bickerings might, by possibility, arise at the Hall out of the circumstances which had so lately taken place, and that a contro-

versy might ensue, in which he might find himself personally involved to an extent somewhat greater than would be altogether pleasant to his feelings. Now, my Cousin Nicholas hated argument and squabbling about trifles, nor was he ever known to enjoy a joke at his own expense.

Any of these motives, if taken separately, would have been sufficient,—there was no resisting them all in combination—so my Cousin cantered away, and, having a pretty taste, enough, for the picturesque, was highly delighted by several charming prospects of the surrounding country which he encountered in the course of his ride. So much, indeed, did they engross his attention, that time slipped away unheeded, and he did not reach Underdown Hall, on his return, till long after the hour which had dismissed the Doctor to his own “Sweet Home,” as well scoured, scrubbed, and scraped, as if he had gone through a regular course of brick-dust, sand, and emery paper.

## CHAPTER IV.

Parmulâ non bene  
Relictâ.—HOR.

What, Sir ! do ye make us illegetimate ?

*Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm.*

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THE “BOAST OF HERALDRY.”—“THE PITCHER THAT GOES TOO OFTEN TO THE WELL,” ETC.—A SCRAPE, AND A DEPARTURE.

THESE last freaks of my Cousin Nicholas were too important, both in their nature and consequences, to admit of their being passed over without some little notice. Dr. Drench, in addition to the deranged state of his wardrobe and osteology, complained bitterly of the injury sustained by Punch, who unluckily, from some cause or other, happened to fall very lame about this period, a circumstance which the

Doctor failed not to attribute to my Cousin's equestrian performances; and he positively refused any farther attendance, friendly or professional, at Underdown Hall, while it should contain so facetious an inmate. My mother availed herself of the occasion to renew, in the most forcible terms, certain suggestions previously made as to the propriety of her nephew's removal to some public seminary, where, under the pruning and training hand of a skilful master, those vigorous shoots of intellect might acquire a proper direction—hinting, at the same time, that considerable danger might arise, lest, like all other plants of equal exuberance, his genius, from being allowed to run wild and uncultivated, might eventually become weak and exhausted, or even perish immaturely, from the force of its own luxuriance. She even went so far, when once more sufficiently recovered to join the family circle, as to make his temporary secession from home the *sine quâ non* of her own continued residence there. It may, however, be doubted, after all, how far her well-meant remonstrances would have succeeded with Sir

Oliver in inducing him to part from his darling Nicholas, had not that young gentleman's star assumed at this time a peculiarly malignant aspect, and impelled him, in perfect contradiction to his usual custom, to direct the next effort of his wit against no less a personage than the Baronet himself.

A long passage at the farther extremity of the mansion (used in the late Baronet's time as a laundry, but dignified by the present with the name of the "Northern Gallery") contained, among much other curious matter, a series of portraits, representing sundry, real or supposed, worthies of the illustrious house of Bullwinkle. At the extreme end stood the redoubted Roger himself, or rather his armour, consisting of an habergeon, or shirt of chain mail, a cuirass, which some hypercritical Meyrick might not improbably have referred to a later age—a helmet, gauntlets, and shield; all of which had, till within these few years, occupied a niche in one of the aisles of the parish church of Underdown. They had there been long in the habit of swinging suspended over a tomb,

on which the mutilated remains of a recumbent figure still reclined, though so much defaced, as to render it difficult to pronounce, with any degree of certainty, whether it were the effigies of a human being or not. At its lower extremity, however, those parts which corresponded to the legs of a man were manifestly crossed, and this circumstance at once induced Sir Oliver to pronounce it to be the tomb of a Crusader,—and, if of a Crusader, *a fortiori*, of that flower of chivalry, the magnanimous Roger himself;—nay, so far did he carry his enthusiasm in favour of this hypothesis, that nothing but the sacred character of the offender had prevented him in his earlier years from challenging a former incumbent of the parish, who observed, with more of levity than of reverence, that “the position was, undoubtedly, that either of a Templar or a Tailor.” This palpable attempt to detract from his venerated ancestor eight-ninths of his consequence in the scale of humanity my Uncle never forgave.—But to return.

On the death of the aforesaid scoffer, my Uncle had obtained the consent of the Rev. Mr.



Bustle, whom he then presented to the living, (the Churchwardens, for divers weighty reasons, not opposing his wishes,) to remove the several pieces of armour, mentioned above, from their exalted situation to his own house, and as a due acknowledgement of their politeness, Sir Oliver presented the parish in return with a handsome set of communion-plate for the use of the church.

Having secured his prize, the Baronet's first care was to have the rust and accumulated impurities of so many years removed as much as possible, and the whole put into a complete state of repair, under the immediate and personal surveillance of the village blacksmith. In the course of the process, the remains of something like a device, which time and damps had combined to obscure, were discovered on the shield, and the delighted antiquary forthwith availed himself of the talents of a wandering artist, then luckily engaged in painting a new sign for the "King's Arms," to delineate (or, as he said, replace) upon its surface "three golden fetterlocks, clasped, in a field azure," the an-

cient heraldic blazonry of all the Bullwinkles. Thus renovated and restored to their pristine splendour, the arms of Sir Roger were erected in the manner of a trophy, over a pedestal inscribed with the Knight's name, and placed in the most conspicuous part of the gallery. This was ever after Sir Oliver's favourite apartment, and thither he retired on the evening succeeding my mother's attack upon him, to reflect upon her request, and upon the alternative which had been presented to his choice.

My Uncle perambulated the gallery for some time in silence, his hands crossed behind his back, and his eyes fixed upon the floor, while his footsteps, slow and unequal, betrayed the irresolution of his mind. His sister—so long lost, so lately recovered!—to lose her again seemed the very acme of misfortune, especially since the increasing comforts of his home, and his reduced expenditure, had taught him fully to appreciate her value. But then, again, his only son!—the beloved of his heart,—the delight of his eyes;—the youthful scion destined to transmit the blood of the Bullwinkles down

to the remotest posterity ; the last, sole hope of an honourable name !—True, indeed, Nick was, certainly, rather too bad—rather too much devoted to pleasantry, and of a disposition requiring the curb rather than the spur ;—but then to banish him from the home of his fathers, an exile from those scenes which his progenitors had so long (in all likelihood) trodden—which somebody had unquestionably trodden, and Bullwinkles more probably than anybody else ;—there was sorrow in the thought—it was *not* to be thought of.

“ No ! ” exclaimed my Uncle, facing about suddenly, and confronting the panoply of Sir Roger—“ No ! ” cried he, extending his hand with the force and majesty of a Demosthenes, “ never be it said that the heir of Underdown was, even for an hour, thrust like an expatriated fugitive from that roof which has sheltered so many generations of his forefathers !—never be it said that a youth of such noble endowments,—one so alive to the dignity of his family, so justly proud of his high descent and unblemished lineage, so—”

The glance of Sir Oliver rested for a moment on the emblazoned escutcheon of Sir Roger de Bolevaincle, whom he was just about to apostrophize—did that glance deceive him?—or had a miracle indeed been worked to cast a scandal upon his hitherto untainted pedigree?— He paused abruptly, and stepped forward with all the agility he was master of, in order to convince himself that the object which had “seared his eyeballs,” was but an “unreal mockery.”— But no! the phantasm, instead of vanishing at his approach, as he had half hoped it would have done, stoutly stood its ground, and presented to his horror-struck and incredulous gaze the apparition of a “*bend sinister*,”—that opprobrious mark of shame and illegitimacy,—drawn diagonally athwart the “golden fetterlocks in the azure field,” the immaculate and ever-honoured bearings of the Bullwinkles,—while the family motto *Sans peur et sans reproche*, so noble and so appropriate, was rendered completely illegible by a broad streak of black paint.

Sir Oliver rushed from the gallery in a paroxysm of rage and astonishment.—The servants,—every soul in the house, from my mother down to the kitchen-wench inclusive, were examined as to their knowledge of the author of this piece of atrocity. No one, however, was found able or willing to throw any light upon the subject, till Miss Kitty Pyefinch suggesting the probability, “that, after all, it was only a joke of Master Nicholas’s,” one of the footmen recollected that, some two days before, a carpenter, employed in painting and repairing the fences in the grounds, had complained to him that Master Nicholas had run away with his paint-pot and brushes.—The subsequent discovery and identification of these very articles in a corner of the gallery, no longer left any doubt as to the person of the culprit.

The fate of my Cousin Nicholas was from this moment decided. A decree, as irrevocable as those of the Medes and Persians, was pronounced, and another fortnight saw Master Bullwinkle an inmate of the parsonage house, occu-

ped by the Rev. Mr. Bustle, who to his clerical functions superadded that of master of the *menagerie* to “a limited number of select pupils,” in a parish a few miles distant, which he held *in commendam* with that of Underdown. The term of my own holidays having expired, I also left the Hall upon the same day on which my Cousin quitted it, and returned to Westminster.

## CHAPTER V.

Delightful task ! to rear the tender mind,  
To teach the young idea how to shoot !

THOMSON.

The Poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from Heav'n to earth, from earth to Heav'n ;  
And, as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the Poet's pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

SHAKESPEARE.

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THE MARCH OF INTELLECT.—MUSÆ BULLWINKLIANÆ.—HOW  
SLEEP THE BRAVE !

WHILE Mr. Bustle was labouring diligently in his vocation as scavenger to the Augean stable of my Cousin Nicholas's intellect, and endeavouring, with all the persevering spirit of the most industrious kitchen wench, to scour out certain stains and blemishes in his manners, derived, as he said, from the defective mode

of his early education,—while he was “preparing him for the University,” by a very summary process, not unlike that by which poulterers in the metropolis are said to prepare turkeys for the spit, viz. by cramming them with all sorts of good things, till their crops are ready to burst through repletion—I was proceeding, through the usual routine of the foundation of which I was an *alumnus*, towards the same desirable end; and, as the plan adopted by my instructors was that of going on in the old, straightforward, beaten track used by our fathers before us, without bewildering themselves in the modern fashionable short cuts to the Temple of Knowledge, or “leaping learning’s hedges and ditches,” in order to arrive at their goal by a less circuitous route, it cannot be supposed that my progress in the *belles lettres* was half so rapid or so brilliant as that of my cousin. Indeed, the intellectual as well as the corporeal gullet of Mr. Nicholas Bullwinkle was of an extraordinary capacity, and, from its amazing powers of expansion, might almost have warranted a suspicion that it might be composed of



Indian-rubber. If its powers of digestion were not commensurate, but suffered the raw material which it received to remain crude and unconcocted, that could hardly be supposed to be the fault of his purveyor, the Rev. Mr. Bustle.

In point of fact, that learned gentleman was, in a very short time, mightily pleased with the proficiency of his new pupil, who, as he declared, evinced a decided taste for poetry, as well as for polite literature in general,—an opinion in which his father (who, to say the truth, was not, perhaps, qualified to do more than hazard a conjecture on the subject) perfectly coincided, so that in the space of a couple of years my cousin Nicholas ran an imminent risk of being considered an absolute *lusus naturæ*, a prodigy of genius. His fame about the same time was fully confirmed and established by the *fiat* of Miss Pyefinch herself, whose exquisite tact and experience in all matters of this description rendered her, as we have before taken occasion to observe, sole and undisputed arbitress of the literary merits and demerits of every pretender within five miles of Underdown.

This excellent lady, whose prejudices at no very distant period had certainly operated considerably to my cousin's disadvantage, had been of late much propitiated by various effusions, some of them of rather an amatory cast, which, issuing from the pen of the young poet, had been, with the appearance of great devotedness, most humbly inscribed to herself; nor was the deportment of the juvenile bard, on his occasional returns to the Hall, such as wholly to supersede the idea that her charms, like those of the celebrated *Ninon de L'Enclos*, had achieved a conquest, and lighted up a flame in a youthful breast, when somewhat past what rigid critics might call the period of their maturity. Several of these tender lays were, by Miss Pyefinch, extolled above all that Hammond or Moore ever wrote; and though many persons were of opinion, from the hyperbolic compliments contained in them, that Mr. Nicholas had either taken leave of his senses, or was only indulging his old propensity to "hoaxing," she never could be brought to subscribe to it.

One of these lyrics, containing less of passion

and more of sentiment than the generality of his effusions, I shall take leave to present my readers with. It was placed by him in Miss Pyefinch's hand one fine evening after his return from a solitary ramble in the garden, having been rudely written down with a pencil, and is, on the whole, no bad specimen of my cousin's poetical abilities.

## THE POET'S BOWER.

A bower there is, a lowly bower,  
In which my soul delights to dwell ;  
No gorgeous dome, or storied tower,  
Can charm my fancy half so well !

No Zeuxis ere its walls adorn'd,  
No Phidias bade its columns rise ;  
Such aids the humbler artist scorn'd,  
Nor taught its towers to court the skies.

But the low wall's contracted bound  
The Ivy's amorous folds entwine,  
And wanton Woodbines circling round,  
To deck the blest retreat combine.

The Lilac, child of frolic May,  
There flings her fragrance to the breeze ;  
There, too, with golden tresses gay,  
Laburnums wave in graceful case.

## MY COUSIN NICHOLAS.

And there, in loveliest tints array'd,  
 How sweetly blooms the blushing Rose!  
 While round, a soft and varying shade  
 The Willow's bending form bestows.

Far in my garden's utmost bound  
 The modest mansion rears its head,  
 There noisy crowds are never found,  
 No giddy throngs its peace invade ;

No " stores beneath its humble thatch,"  
 Like Edwin's, " ask a master's care ;"  
 The wicket, opening with a latch,  
 Receives the lonely swain or fair.

Within inscribed, above, around,  
 Are lines of mystic import seen ;  
 And many a quaint device is found,  
 And many a glowing verse between.

'Tis here, at morn or dewy eve,  
 In meditative mood reclined,  
 The world, its pomps and cares, I leave,  
 And shut the door on all mankind.

Full many a tome's neglected weight,  
 Here, page by page, mine eyes survey ;  
 Full many a Patriot's warm debate,  
 And many a youthful Poet's lay ;—

Sweet ! oh sweet, the evening hour !  
 'Tis then I bid the world farewell—  
 'Tis then I seek the lonely Bower  
 In which my soul delights to dwell !

Miss Pyefinch was charmed with this production of my Cousin's muse ;—the only thing that puzzled her was, whereabouts this nice little retreat could possibly be situated, as memory refused to supply her with any edifice about the grounds at all answering the description given of it.

Sir Oliver, indeed, hazarded a suggestion, but the fair Sappho was highly scandalized at the insinuation it contained ; and most indignantly rejecting the solution offered, finally concluded that the whole was merely a flight of fancy, or, as she was pleased to phrase it, “ a Poetic fiction.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The period was now rapidly approaching at which it was thought advisable that I should be removed from Westminster to the University. I was turned of eighteen, tall and active, and furnished with a sufficient *quantum* of Greek and Latin to make my *début* among those classic scenes, without any violent apprehension of a failure. Colonel Stafford had been for some time in England ; his constitution, originally

not a strong one, had been much injured by the exertions, privations, and fatigues, necessarily attendant on a desultory and protracted series of campaigns ; of late, too, the mode of warfare had begun to assume a more decided character, and the “ marchings and counter-marchings ” were now, as the plans of the great commander who directed the operations changed from the defensive to the offensive, interspersed with skirmishes and actions, dangerous in the extreme during their progress, though ever glorious in their results.

Frequently exposed, from the nature of his official situation on the staff, to the hottest fire of the enemy, and urged by the innate gallantry of a disposition rather impetuous than prudent, into dangers which he might perhaps without discredit have avoided ; still the “ sweet little cherub that sits up aloft ” seemed to watch over my father’s safety with unwearied vigilance. Often was the weapon levelled by man, but Heaven averted the ball ; and, with a single exception, he came out of every conflict scathless and uninjured.

It was not till after his return to England, whither he was at length despatched with the official accounts of the battle of ——, and his subsequent retirement into the bosom of his family, that the ravages made in his health, by his long-continued subjection to the hardships of a military life, passed under the inauspicious combinations of an active enemy and an ungenial climate, were fully apparent. A wound, too, originally of a trivial nature, as his friends had been taught to believe, but which had never been entirely healed, now joined to occasion alarm to his friends, and to give a character to other symptoms which betokened a sure though gradual decay.

Mrs. Stafford for a while shut her eyes, and remained obstinately blind to what was perfectly apparent to every one else; she fondly flattered herself that the increasing debility of her husband might be successfully combated by quiet, his native air, and the soothing attentions of conjugal affection.—Alas! her hopes were groundless;—the hectic on his cheek became, it is true, more vivid, but it contrasted painfully

with the sallow paleness of the rest of his countenance, while a short dry cough, and his attenuated form, evinced but too surely that his stamina were affected, if not reduced.

The symptoms were but too prophetic: as spring (the third since his return) advanced, his inability to contend longer against disease became daily more evident, till early in the fatal month of May, a month so critical to invalids, my dear father resigned his upright and honourable spirit into the hands of Him who gave it.

My poor mother was overwhelmed with the most profound grief by this melancholy event; the more so, as although of late the conviction had been forced upon her that Colonel Stafford was in a rapidly declining state, still she had never contemplated the probability of so sudden a dissolution of those ties which formed the principal joy of her existence. It was done, however.—Those ligaments of the soul which bound her to an adored and adoring husband, were at length severed; and till their reunion in a future world, I was the only object to



which she was now to look for comfort and support. My father's death had been so sudden, that I had barely time to reach home, from Christ Church,—of which I had some time since become a member,—in order to receive his last blessing. He died like a Christian, calm, fearless, and resigned, with his latest breath commending my mother to my care.

Years have since rolled on, but the moment is fresh as ever in my memory.—May I never forget it !

## CHAPTER VI.

He saw her charming, but he saw not half  
 The charms her downcast modesty concealed.

THOMSON.

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A LETTER.—A JOURNEY.—MUSIC HATH CHARMS.—DUCKING  
 AND DODGING.—A CHASE.—THROWN OUT AT LAST.—  
 STOLEN AWAY!

LITTLE of moment occurred either to myself or my friends during the next two years. My mother was still an inmate of Underdown Hall, where her attentions were now become absolutely indispensable to the comfort of her brother. A settled, but calm melancholy, had succeeded to those severer transports of grief which had engrossed every faculty of her mind during the first burst of her affliction at the loss of my father, and now, if not happy, she was at least resigned. My Cousin Nicholas had entered

himself a gentleman-commoner of Brazennose College, but so widely different were our pursuits and habits, that, although such near neighbours, we saw but little of each other; nevertheless, a tolerably good understanding was kept up between us, and, though rarely visiting, we always remained upon terms of civility.

One morning, at a rather earlier hour than was customary with him, Nicholas made his appearance at my rooms in Peckwater, and invited himself to breakfast with me. I soon found that his object in paying me this friendly visit was to borrow a little money, a circumstance which had occurred once or twice before, at times when his exchequer had been at a low ebb. My own finances happened on this occasion to be by no means in a flourishing condition, and I was on the point of confessing my inability to accommodate him at present, when a letter was delivered to me by the "Scout," which, from its size and weight, appeared to contain an enclosure.

It was from my mother, requesting to see me immediately, "upon urgent business," which,

as she informed me, was of a nature calculated to influence, and that very materially, my future prospects in life. She declined entering into particulars till we should meet, conjured me to lose no time in setting out to join her, and expressed her hopes of seeing me on the third day, at latest, from that on which I should receive her epistle.—The enclosure was a remittance of sufficient magnitude to obviate any difficulties of a pecuniary nature which might tend to retard my progress.

This supply came very seasonably for my Cousin Nicholas, with whom I immediately shared it, as the moiety would, I found, amply provide for my own wants on the journey I was about to undertake ; a journey, the necessity for which I did not hesitate to acquaint him of, and heard, in reply, that the reason which had induced him to apply to me for assistance, was the impossibility of his otherwise carrying into execution a scheme he had entertained of proceeding *incognito* to London, for some particular purpose which he had in view. As he did not explain what this particular pur-

pose was, I thought it unnecessary to inquire into it, but acceded at once to the proposal which he now made, that we should travel to the metropolis together.

Little preparation was necessary for either of us ; I hastily threw a few articles of dress into a portmanteau, and, through the interposition of my tutor, found no difficulty in obtaining leave for my immediate departure, more especially as I had already resided the number of days requisite for keeping the term, and the Easter vacation was at hand.

Not so Nicholas ; — his irregularities had, of late, been too notorious for him to hope to obtain permission to secede one hour before the appointed time. This unlucky circumstance, however, he found means to obviate, by placing his name on the sick-list, or “pricking *æger*,” as he technically termed it ; when, having directed his servant to draw his commons regularly from the buttery till his return—feeling, moreover, a moral certainty that this injunction would be faithfully observed, inasmuch as the said commons would of course be applied to

the sole use and benefit of the receiver during the interval — he walked with the greatest possible composure over Magdalen Bridge, and was taken up by my post-chaise at the foot of Heddington Hill, where the somewhat longer, but by far the most picturesque of the two roads that lead to the metropolis turns off abruptly to the right.

The day was beautiful, and my Cousin, on finding himself clear of the environs of Oxford without detection, proceeded to disencumber himself of sundry large silk handkerchiefs which enveloped the whole of the lower part of his face, and bade adieu to a voluminous surtout which had also assisted materially in disguising his figure during his walk. The silver waves of old Father Thames rolled at our feet in many a shining meander, through a scene of more than Arcadian loveliness, as we entered the town of Henley. Here we partook of a hasty dinner, when, eager to reach London, I resolutely resisted all Nicholas's covert insinuations respecting the excellence of the wine, — “the best, by far, he had ever tasted at an inn,” —

as well as his more open proposals for the discussion of one more "quiet" bottle. The horses were again put to, and in due time deposited us safely at the Tavistock Hotel, in Covent Garden.

Having drunk a cup of coffee, and got rid of the uncomfortable sensation which usually succeeds a journey, however easily and pleasantly performed, Mr. Bullwinkle once more suggested that a bottle of Lafitte would prove an excellent succedaneum in the absence of all other amusement; observing at the same time, that the day being a Wednesday in Lent, and all theatrical entertainments of course suspended, he should not otherwise "know what to do with himself."

My head was so full of conjectures as to the nature of "the urgent business" which had occasioned my being thus suddenly summoned from my studies, and my mind was so exclusively occupied in forming a thousand improbable guesses on the subject, that I should in all likelihood have acceded to the proposal, from mere antipathy to any change of place

which might tend to disturb the current of my ideas, had I not plainly perceived that the madeira which we, or rather he, had swallowed at Henley, had already performed its part, and elevated my Cousin's spirits quite as high as prudence would sanction. Well knowing that his general propensity to get into scrapes wanted not any excitation from the "Tuscan grape" to call it into play, I once more positively declined joining him in his potations; and in order to prevent his sitting down and getting drunk by himself, an alternative which I had little doubt he would adopt, proposed that, as neither play nor opera was exhibiting, we should look in at Covent Garden, and listen to the delightful music of "Acis and Galatea." Nicholas said, indeed swore, that an Oratorio was "the greatest of all possible nuisances," and that he would as soon "be crucified" as listen to one; but finding me absolutely determined not to "make a night of it," he at length, though with undisguised reluctance, agreed to accompany me rather than "snore over the bottle" by himself.



We found the house very full, and, being still in our travelling dresses, resolved, in order to avoid the risk of encountering any of the more fashionable part of our acquaintance in the present deranged state of our habiliments, to go into the pit ; for at the period to which my narrative refers, the “customary suit of solemn black” worn in the boxes by both sexes during Lent, at what were then literally “performances of sacred music,” had not yet yielded to the innovating hand of modern illumination. Our intention was carried into effect not without some little difficulty, for on our arrival every seat was occupied, and we were glad to take up our stations in “very excellent standing-room” near one of the benches, at no great distance from the orchestra.

The fascinating siren, Stephens, who had then just reached the zenith of her reputation, was never in finer voice ; and whatever unwillingness Nicholas might have originally felt to be “bored with their confounded catgut,” still even he was not entirely proof against such enchanting melody. As to myself, with a mind

naturally delighting in the concord of sweet sounds, a taste I had inherited from my mother, whose whole soul was attuned to harmony, I had for some time neither eyes nor ears for anything but the fair songstress on the stage; till at length, during a temporary cessation of her exertions, occasioned by a movement in the accompaniment, a slight, and half-suppressed exclamation of delight drew my attention to my immediate neighbour, who occupied a corner of the bench close to which I was standing.

It was a female, clad, like the major part of the audience, in mourning, over which was thrown a loose garment of grey cloth, then termed "a Bath cloak;" nor did anything in her dress indicate a superiority over the generality of those who usually occupied that portion of the theatre in which she had placed herself; still the whole appearance, both of herself and her companions, evinced their respectability.

These latter consisted of an elderly female in the modest garb of middle life, having much the appearance of a substantial tradesman's wife,

and a lad whom I conjectured to be her son ; the latter was about sixteen years of age, and, by his frequent yawns and sleepy demeanour, seemed to be a fellow-sufferer with my Cousin Nicholas, and to have imbibed at least some portion of that *ennui* which the latter always professed to feel, and probably experienced, whenever he entered a music-room. On these two, however, I bestowed but a very cursory glance, my whole attention being immediately and involuntarily engrossed by the lovely creature to whom the old lady performed the office of *chaperon*, for that any closer connexion existed between her and the being who was fast becoming the object of my idolatry, my whole soul revolted from believing.

Early accustomed to mix in good society, I had enjoyed many opportunities of seeing most of the celebrated *belles* of the day, but never, in the whole course of my experience, had I met with a form and countenance so well calculated to make an impression on the susceptible heart of a romantic and amorous youth of one-and-twenty. She appeared to be some

three or four years my junior, her complexion was dazlingly brilliant, her features were cast in the finest mould of beauty, while the vivacity and intelligence that sparkled in her dark blue eyes evinced the powers of the mind within, that gave animation to so expressive and charming a countenance. The fixed intensity of my gaze at length attracted her notice, and she blushed deeply as her eye sank beneath mine; yet was there a something, in the occasionally recurring glance which I encountered, that told me her shrinking from my regard was rather the effect of modesty than displeasure.

While I was meditating in what manner I should introduce myself to one who had already made a much greater progress in my good graces than even I myself was aware of, “that which not one of the gods could venture to promise me, chance spontaneously offered to my acceptance.”\* One of the light-fingered fraternity, who so generally frequent places of amusement, was, while labouring in his vocation, detected by my Cousin Nicholas in the very act of clan-

\* Turne, quod optanti tibi Divûm promittere nemo Auderet, volvenda dies, en, attulit ultro.—VIRG.

destinely subtracting from the coat-pocket of the sleepy-looking youth just mentioned, as it stood most invitingly open, a large silk handkerchief, therein deposited till the termination of the performance should restore it to its original use, that of protecting the lower part of his physiognomy from the rawness and inclemency of the night-air. Now as it formed no part of my Cousin's system of politics to sanction any mischief that neither amused nor interested him, and as he foresaw, in a moment, that the bustle consequent on the detection of so nefarious a piece of delinquency might probably do both, and be infinitely more agreeable and enlivening than even the music of the spheres, had he been within hearing of their celestial harmony, he hesitated not an instant to proclaim his acquaintance with the deed then in the course of perpetration, and to interrupt the meditated retreat of this dexterous conveyancer.

The disturbance which ensued may be imagined. The offender, thus taken in the very act, or, as the Scotch have it, "with the red hand," found it useless to deny, and impossible to justify, his unauthorized appropriation of

another's chattels. A portion of the surrounding spectators prepared immediately to put in force that very summary law, of which the Mobility of England might, in those days, have been considered at once the framers, the expounders, and executioners, but which, much to the regret of all good citizens, has of late years sunk into desuetude. No one then dreamed, in such cases, for one moment of "the New Police," or an appeal to "his Worship:"—to their own salutary decree did they have immediate recourse; which said decree, as it was not to be found in any of the books, belonged most probably to the "unwritten, or common law," and directed that the guilt of the criminal should be forthwith washed and purged away through the medium of the nearest pump.

"Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the conception, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream."

And so it was on the present occasion. While that highly respectable part of the community, to which I have just alluded, were, in the exercise of their undisputed prerogative, hurrying

off to condign punishment the atrocious depre-  
dator “vot had prigged the gemman’s wive,”  
in full accordance with the statute (by them)  
in that case made and provided, considerable  
confusion arose in the immediate vicinity of the  
transaction; certain ladies shrieked, others  
fainted, while a few *ultras* both shrieked and  
fainted. — My charmer did neither; but the  
agitation of her manner, and the lily, now fast  
usurping the place of the rose upon her cheek,  
showed that she was not altogether insensible  
to alarm.

Perhaps there is no moment so favourable  
for a lover as that in which the object of his  
affections either is, or fancies herself to be, in  
danger, with no other protection to fly to but  
his own. I failed not to seize the golden op-  
portunity, and improved so well the few mi-  
nutes of bustle which ensued, as not only to  
introduce, but to ingratiate myself considerably  
both with the damsel and the matron. As to  
the “lubberly boy,” this little fracas, in which  
his handkerchief had borne so distinguished a  
part, (an article, by the way, which the gen-

tleman, who had rescued it from the fangs of the pickpocket when Nicholas seized his collar, forgot, in the excess of his indignation, to return to its owner,) had given a fillip to nature, and he was actually wide awake for a full quarter of an hour; but as his mind was entirely occupied by the magnitude of his loss, his presence gave me not the slightest molestation.

I was much more annoyed by Nicholas, who, in spite of my endeavours to keep him in the background, would occasionally interfere; nor could I help heartily wishing that he had carried his love of justice so far as to have gone and assisted at the ceremony of immersion, — whether as *pumper* or *pumpee*, I should not have cared one farthing.—As things stood, I was obliged to let matters take their own course; though I certainly could have dispensed with his society when, at the conclusion of the Oratorio, he made a daring, though happily an unsuccessful attempt, to induce the young lady to accept his assistance in getting clear of the crowd, and to leave me the more honourable, but less pleasing, post of acting as escort to her antiquated



companion. This arrangement, however, I was sufficiently on the alert to frustrate, and almost dared to flatter myself that the nymph lent her aid in rendering vain his manœuvre, as she thankfully accepted my arm, and afforded me the inexpressible delight of conducting her to a hackney-coach, which had apparently remained in waiting for the party. But notwithstanding the footing I had contrived to gain by my attention to their convenience during the disturbance, as well as afterwards, I nevertheless found it impossible to extract from either the young or the old lady the secret of their address, and was inexpressibly disappointed when, having placed them in the coach, and received their acknowledgements for what they termed my politeness, the matron, simply saying to the coachman, "To the house you brought us from!" made me a most gracious bow, and drew up the window.

The vehicle was in motion the next minute, but not before honest *Jarvis*, in return for a half-crown piece, had sold me the interesting intelligence that the place of his destination was

Jermyn Street. Determined, however, to be fully satisfied as to the accuracy of my information, as well as to ascertain the particular house to which the party was bound, I failed not to follow the coach, which proceeding at a very moderate pace, enabled me to keep it in view without any difficulty, till I saw it eventually disembogue its precious contents at the door of a respectable-looking house in the street above-named.

My first care on having thus fortunately, as I supposed, succeeded in "marking the covey down," was to put myself in possession of the number of the mansion; which done, I proposed to return for the present to the hotel. But this arrangement by no means met the ideas of my Cousin Nicholas, who had kindly, and without any solicitation on my part, accompanied me in the chase. He now found himself, at its termination, very unexpectedly, in the immediate vicinity of an edifice which contained an object possessing charms, to him not less attractive than those which had operated to bring me into the same neighbourhood. This object of my

Cousin's devotions was a certain table, most beautifully variegated and adorned with a motley covering of red and black cloth, exhibiting, moreover, the delightful accompaniment of sundry packs of cards, together with all and every the sacrificial instruments necessary for offering up human victims at the shrine of Plutus. Many were the persuasions made use of by my Cousin to induce me to accompany him into the penetralia of this temple of Mammon, the more recondite mysteries of which he very kindly offered to initiate me in. Resisting all his importunities to engage in so dangerous a pursuit, and finding it useless to persuade him to alter his own determination, I at length quitted him in the street, and retraced my steps to the Tavistock,—to dream of an angel — in a Bath cloak.

The following morning I arose an hour before my usual time, and scarcely allowed myself a few moments to swallow a hasty breakfast, so eager was I to avail myself of the little services which I had been fortunate enough to render my goddess the night before, by calling to “hope she had experienced no serious ill effects from her

alarm." I was, besides, in a complete fidget lest Nicholas, too, should be taken with a freak of early rising, and should insist on joining me in my proposed visit. In this respect, however, my fears were perfectly groundless, as I found, on inquiry, that worthy had not been very long in bed, having, as I doubted not, spent the major part of the preceding night in that rapturous vacillation of spirit produced by the alternation of good and bad fortune in some exciting game of chance. He was still sound asleep; I took good care not to disturb him, and set out on my adventure alone.

However deserving they may be, we know that "it is not in mortals to command success"—a truth which I was destined to experience most painfully in the present instance.

On applying at the house in Jermyn Street, I was astounded by the information that no ladies, answering the description which I gave, resided there at all, although two such had certainly taken tea the day before with "Mrs. Morgan, a lodger who occupied the first floor;" that they had afterwards gone away in a hackney-coach,

—to the theatre, it was believed,—and had returned late in the evening, but that they had only remained a few minutes, when, having partaken of the contents of a tray which had been set out in expectation of their arrival, they had finally taken their departure in a handsome dark-green chariot, which came to fetch them away.

This, at least, was the account furnished me by the servant girl, whose good offices I secured by a trifling present, and who also informed me, that she had never seen the younger lady of the two before, and the elder not above three or four times.

Much disconcerted at this intelligence, I could not refrain from cursing my own stupidity in allowing them thus to escape me, though wiser heads than mine might have been puzzled to know how to have prevented it, as not the slightest suspicion of their being merely visitors at the house to which I traced them, had ever entered my mind. My only course was to promise the girl an additional gratuity, if she could succeed in learning the place of their abode ;

which done, I walked, with a very different step, and in a very different frame of mind from that in which I had set out, towards St. James's Park, revolving with myself the means which it would be most advisable for me to adopt, in order to obtain the wished-for intelligence. Nor did it fail to present itself to my recollection, that a very short time indeed was left me to make the necessary inquiries, unless I should altogether give up the idea of attending my mother's summons by the day appointed in her letter. Twenty-four hours, however, I thought I could command, and wonders might be achieved in half that time by a sincere and enterprising lover; but vain were all my efforts to discover my fair *incognita*;—in vain did I traverse half the streets at the west end of the town;—in vain did I peer and peep into every shop I passed, and scrutinize every window with the keenness of a familiar of *La Santa Hermandad*. Once, indeed, I thought I caught a glimpse of a figure similar in the delicacy of its proportions to that of my charmer, and my heart beat high with hope renewed; but, alas! only to increase

my disappointment, when, after I had sorely bruised my shins, and beat all the breath out of my body, by "making a cannon" between an apple-barrow and an old clothesman, in my hurry to "head" the fancied angel, my eyes were blasted by the sight of a face as hideous as age and ugliness could make it.

Weary and dispirited I at length gave up my fruitless chase; but, ere I returned to my hotel, resolved on making one final and desperate effort to recover the scent. With this view I entered a jeweller's shop, whose windows displayed "an elegant assortment" of trinkets, and having purchased a plain but handsome vinaigrette, which I afterwards replenished at a perfumer's, once more retraced my steps to Jermyn Street. From my new auxiliary, the maid, I soon learned that I had nothing farther to expect in that quarter, at present, in the way of intelligence, and therefore boldly demanded to see Mrs. Morgan herself,

Fortunately, as I then imagined, that lady was at home; so, desiring the girl to announce me simply as "a gentleman on business," I was

introduced forthwith into the presence of an elderly female, furnished with one of the most forbidding visages that it has ever been my lot to encounter. Nothing daunted, however, at her "vinegar aspect," I proceeded at once to unfold the "nature of my business," which was, as my readers will doubtless have anticipated, neither more nor less than "to restore to the *elder* of the two ladies I had the honour of escorting from the play-house, the evening before, a vinaigrette, which I had unwittingly retained after its use was rendered superfluous by the recovery of *her daughter* from the terror she had experienced, and to express my fervent hopes that her alarm had been attended by no unpleasant consequences."

Whether it was that the old snap-dragon suspected my veracity from the expression of my tell-tale countenance, I knew not; though I think it far from improbable, as I never in my life could acquire from my Cousin Nicholas that happy nonchalance with which he would utter you half a dozen lies in a breath, without the slightest embarrassment or discomposure of mus-



ele: certain it is, that my tormenting auditress soon convinced me that it would be easier to extract a guinea from a miser's purse, or a plain answer from a diplomatist's portefeuille, than to obtain from her the information I so eagerly panted to obtain.

With an excess of good breeding, ludicrously at variance with the sourness of her physiognomy, she eluded my request to be admitted to see the lady, parried all my inquiries, thanked me for my civility, and, requesting me to give myself no farther trouble about the trinket, (which she pledged herself to return to the right owner at an early opportunity,) fairly bowed and curtsied me out of the house, without my having been able to arrive at any other certainty than that I had thrown away five pounds ten shillings upon a most unprofitable speculation, and one which presented not the shadow of a return; in short, the cool, sarcastic demeanour of that terrible old woman fully convinced me that, from the very first, she had penetrated my motives, seen through my stratagem, and made my whole scheme recoil upon myself. One advantage,

however, I had at least gained by my attempt ; that was the securing still farther the assistance of my friendly Abigail, to whom I made the most magnificent promises on the simple condition that she should transmit the desired intelligence to an address with which I furnished her ; and, with nothing beyond this frail foundation to rest my hopes upon, I at last quitted London, leaving Nicholas behind me, and fully resolving to extricate myself as soon as possible from any engagement which my mother might have formed for me, that I might return to the metropolis, where only I had any hope of succeeding in my search after the, perhaps unconseious, possessor of my runaway heart.

## CHAPTER VII.

Jog on, jog on the footpath way,  
And merrily gain the stile-a !  
Your merry heart goes all the day,  
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

*Autolycus.*

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THE WAY-WORN TRAVELLER.—THE MYSTERY DEVELOPED.—  
GOOD INTENTIONS.—A HINT AND AN INVITATION.—NOUS  
VERRONS.

THE evening of a cold, wet, and dreary day in the month of March saw me once more at Underdown Hall, as gloomy, uncomfortable, and thoroughly out of temper as any dutiful young gentleman in the world could possibly be when thwarted in his pursuits by the untimely interposition of his mamma. The genuine joy, however, expressed by my dear mother at my

arrival, and the cordial greetings of Sir Oliver, soon alleviated, if they failed to dissipate entirely, my chagrin. I say nothing of the friendly shake of the hand vouchsafed me by the taciturn captain, or the simpering congratulations of Miss Pyefinch, who remarked, in the most flattering manner, that "Master Stafford" (I was nearly twenty-two, and measured five feet eleven in my stockings) "has grown surprisingly, and is very much improved altogether since I saw him last."

I found the worthy baronet as stout, as jovial, and as proud of his ancestry as ever; time, indeed, had laid a lenient hand on him, and, but that his hair had begun to assume the tint of the badger rather than that of the raven, little difference was to be observed in his appearance, from that which he had exhibited at the time when I had first been presented to his notice. Not so Mrs. Stafford; her health had never been good since my father's death, and it was with pain I now remarked that she looked much thinner, and was evidently much weaker, than when I had last quitted her;—but her

spirits were still good, much better indeed than I had long been accustomed to see them, and her eye gleamed once more, occasionally, with a portion of that playful fire which during the lifetime of her husband had marked its scintillations.

She was evidently much pleased at something; but what that something was which afforded her so much apparent satisfaction, remained a mystery not to be solved till the following morning. I therefore repressed my curiosity as I best might, and retired to my couch, in the ardent hope of being visited in my dreams by enchanting visions of my fair but unknown enslaver.—Sir Oliver had forced on me certain rations of cold pork for supper.—I fell asleep, and dreamt of the devil and Mrs. Morgan.—

At length

“ The morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Peep'd o'er the top of” our “ high eastern hill.”

After a breakfast which appeared to me to be unusually protracted, I retired with my mother to her dressing-room, there to receive from her

a communication of those weighty motives which had induced her to summon me thus abruptly. I learned that her so doing was the consequence of a letter which she had lately received from a paternal uncle of mine, of whom I had hitherto heard but little, and seen nothing, General Lord Viscount Manningham, the elder, and now the sole surviving brother of my lamented father.

This epistle stated the fact of his lordship's arrival in England, after an absence from his native land of many years' duration, in the course of which time his paternal affections had been severely lacerated, by witnessing a fine and dearly-loved family of promising children yielding, together with their mother, one by one, to the fatal effects of a climate but too uncongenial with a European constitution. Of three boys, and as many girls, one only of the latter now remained to him; and, trembling lest the same dreadful cause which had robbed him in succession of her brothers and sisters, should also deprive him of this, now become his only hope, Lord Manningham had relinquished the high and lucrative situation, and the state,

little short of regal, which he held in one of our richest colonies, to seek once more the shores of his own country, loaded, 'tis true, with wealth, but all too dearly purchased by the loss of his wife and offspring.

Great indeed were the changes which the gallant Viscount found had taken place during his long absence from England. His two brothers were, both of them, no more; of all his once numerous relatives and connexions my mother and myself were the solitary survivors, neither of whom he had, of course, ever beheld. His attachment to his brothers, and to Charles especially, had been a strong one; and although the confined state of his own finances, which in the earlier part of his career were altogether unequal to the decent support of his rank, had prevented his doing for him what his affection dictated, and indeed forced him to sacrifice all his early habits and attachments for the valuable appointment which eventually crowned him with wealth as well as honour, still he ever entertained the kindest feelings towards his youngest brother, and, as far as lay in his

power, had aided his promotion by the exercise of all the interest he possessed ; fully determining, at the same time, to appropriate to his use no niggard portion of that daily increasing property which the gradual contraction of his own family circle rendered the less necessary for his and their exclusive use.

Death, as we have already seen, had frustrated this project ; and Colonel Stafford expired, comparatively ignorant of his fraternal intentions ; but now that the same cruel spoiler had robbed him also of those beloved boys to whom he had once looked up as destined to transmit his name and honours to posterity, Lord Munningham recurred with greater warmth than ever to his original design, and, as the father was beyond the reach of his benevolence, resolved to confer his benefits on the son. In this intention he was the more confirmed, as that son was now, by the failure of his own issue-male, become heir-presumptive to the family title, and the last possessor of the noble name of Stafford.

Such was the tenor of his epistle, which con-



cluded with the expression of an earnest desire to see him who was destined to inherit his honours, and intimated that the character he had already heard of his nephew,—my mother read me this part of the letter with a swelling heart,—in reply to the inquiries which he had instituted respecting him, made him anxious that the meeting should take place as soon as possible.

The letter, which, I need hardly say, was a very long one, and couched in the handsomest and most affectionate terms, contained also a pressing invitation to my mother, urging her to accompany her son to Grosvenor Square, as his engagements with Ministers would, for a time, render it impossible for the Ex-Governor himself to visit the Hall; a hint, too, was conveyed of an embryo plan, the object of which was the union of the senior and junior branches of the House of Stafford, by the marriage of the two last remaining scions of the family.

Of all the proposals that could have been submitted to her, it is doubtful if any one could have been recommended of a nature more gratifying to my mother than the one thus alluded

to. Lord Manningham's wealth was now immense, and, being almost entirely of his own acquisition, was, of course, with the exception of the very small entailed estate which went with the Viscountcy, completely at his own disposal. To me, indeed, a barren title would descend; but that, without the funds necessary to support its dignity, might rather be considered as a misfortune than a boon. An arrangement like the one proposed would obviate every inconvenience. Report spoke highly of the person and accomplishments of the Honourable Miss Stafford, although (from her father's time having been hitherto too much occupied since his return to admit of his forming a suitable establishment,) she had not yet been introduced into general society, but at the next birthday she was to be presented; then, of course, her career of fashion would commence, and, beyond all doubt, numberless admirers among the votaries of *ton* would rapidly present themselves in the train of the possessor of so many charms, and the inheretrix of so many rupees. On every account therefore my

mother was anxious that I should lose no time in securing to myself an interest both with my noble uncle and his fair daughter ; and nothing prevented her from at once writing to me, and explaining the whole affair, but the idea which she entertained that she could better expatiate upon the advantages of such a match in a personal interview, combined with a wish of hearing from my own lips the pleasing assurance that my most earnest endeavours should be forthwith applied to the realization of this her most fondly cherished hope.

Although naturally of a sanguine temperament, and fully alive to all the advantages which rank and property bestow on their possessor, there was nevertheless a something in all this which did not present itself to my view in quite such glowing colours as it did to that of my mother. To be thus unceremoniously disposed of, without being even consulted on the subject, appeared to me neither consistent with the respect I thought my due, nor altogether reasonable. Miss Stafford might, for aught I knew to the contrary, be all that my

mother represented her to be, but then again — she might *not* — or, if she were, I might not like her, or — though self-love whispered that was scarcely possible — she *might* not like me. Nor should I be acting with candour were I to deny that, had this proposal been made to me before I quitted Oxford, it *might* have been viewed in a very different light. At present the charms of the unknown fair one certainly tended most materially to bias my inclinations; and though I was not so far gone, either in love or in romance, as at once to resolve on rejecting so fair an offer, — if offer that might be called, which at most was only an insinuation, — still the recollection of the tender yet modest glances I had encountered in the pit of Covent Garden theatre undoubtedly contributed to render me averse from a proposal, my acceptance of which would of course preclude the possibility of any further acquaintance with the object of my search, even should I be fortunate enough to discover her retreat. Nevertheless I could not help feeling the force of Sir Anthony Absolute's

observation, "it is very unreasonable to object to a lady whom you have never seen;" and the idea at the same moment occurring to me that my attendance on Lord Munningham in town would be, perhaps, the most efficacious method I could take to make the discovery that lay so near my heart, I gave my assent to the proposal that I should pay my uncle a visit, not only without reluctance, but even with an alacrity, to which an unwillingness to occasion so much pain to my mother as I saw the expression of my real feelings on the subject would give her, mainly contributed.

A sort of coxcombical feeling that perhaps after all I *might* like a young lady—who, it was ten to one, might not like me, aided in deciding the matter, and I "gave in my adhesion" with a tolerably decent share of apparent resignation. My mother, however, was not so blind as to be insensible to my indifference on a subject which she had fondly flattered herself would have elicited far more vivid emotions; still, as I expressed no disinclination to the measure, remonstrance was impossible,

and she contented herself with re-stating, in the most persuasive language of which she was mistress, the various and incalculable advantages attending the connexion. Her endeavours were not wholly unsuccessful; and after a day principally spent in reflection upon all the *pros* and *cons* of the business, I went to repose with a resolution of confirming my willingness to avail myself immediately of his Lordship's invitation, trusting to Providence and to events as they might arise, to enable me either to accept or decline the honour intended me. This I signified to my mother before I retired for the night, in such terms as again caused the beam of satisfaction and joy to sparkle in her eye. On the following day I again pursued my way towards that great emporium of the wealth of the universe, which, as I firmly believed, contained, among its other treasures, the paragon of her sex.—Remember, reader, I was then not twenty-two.—

The weather on this occasion was still more boisterous and unpleasant than on the day of

my journey into the country, but I neither marked its state nor felt the inconvenience of it. The road, the prospects, the very post-boys were all charming; and, but that they were rather slow, the horses themselves would have had the benefit of that complacency with which I was now disposed to regard all nature, animate and inanimate — except Mrs. Morgan.

My mother had provided me with an introductory letter to Lord Manningham, expressing the satisfaction she had experienced at finding the sole surviving brother of her lamented Charles thus disposed to countenance and support his widow and only child, while she deeply regretted that the state of her own health was such as to render so long a journey imprudent, not to say impossible, on her part. Of me, her son, she spoke in the fondest terms maternal affection could dictate, and conjured him by the love which, as his letter evinced, he had borne the father, to extend that love to the son. She added her eager coincidence in his half-expressed wish, and her anxious hope

that his Lordship would pay her a visit, at Underdown Hall, at the earliest opportunity which his engagements would afford him.

A civil postscript from Sir Oliver, backing the latter request, completed this momentous despatch, which was delivered into my safe keeping, sealed, in due form, with a fine impression of the Bullwinkle arms, affixed by the Baronet himself, in a circle of sealing-wax the size of a crown-piece.



## CHAPTER VIII.

Assist me, chaste Dian, the Nymph to regain,  
 More fleet than the roe-buck, and wing'd with disdain ;  
 The faster I follow the faster she flies,  
 Though Daphne's pursued 'tis Myrtillo that dies.

*Duetto Affettuoso.*

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NO NEWS NOT ALWAYS GOOD NEWS.—TWO HEADS NOT  
 ALWAYS BETTER THAN ONE.—A SEARCH.—A DISAPPOINT-  
 MENT.—OFF SHE GOES.—TALLYHO!—A CHACE.—A DOUBLE.  
 —FAIRLY THROWN OUT.

It was late in the afternoon when I reached London ; but no sooner had I deposited my baggage safely in my old quarters, than I ran, without even changing my dress, or taking any refreshment, to Jermyn Street.

My old friend Sally opened the door as usual, but her countenance at once told me that she had nothing to communicate. “Neither of the

ladies had called since I was there last," and of course she had as yet had no opportunity of earning the stipulated reward; but "she did not despair."—Nor did I, though I could not help feeling sorely disappointed.

Foiled once more, I returned to the hotel, and, having seated myself in the coffee-room, was slowly pulling to pieces and devouring the solitary muffin that accompanied my cup of coffee, with all the vacant deliberation of mental as well as corporeal lassitude, when a sudden slap on the shoulder induced me to raise my eyes, which immediately encountered an oblique glance from those of my Cousin Nicholas.

I know not whether I have before remarked that my young relative, among his other accomplishments, possessed that of squinting in its most perfect fashion;—looking me, therefore, full in the face, while an ordinary observer would have believed one of his eyes to be directed to the opposite side of the room, and its fellow to the muffineer in my hand.—

"Charles!" quoth he, "is it possible?—I thought you had long ere this been at Under-

down! What!—been snug in town all the while?—eh, old Sobersides?—Ferretting out some wench for a hundred!—The little gipsy we picked up at the playhouse, eh?”

A very respectable portion of the best blood in my veins rushed into my face, as I indignantly repelled this injurious supposition, assuring my Cousin, in tones of greater asperity than usual, that, so far from having been lying *perdu* in London, or engaged in any unworthy pursuit, I had actually been down to his father's, and was indeed but just returned to town.

“Well, well, no great harm done, cousin Charles,—had my guess been a true one, you might, perhaps, have been worse employed.—But how goes it with old Squaretoes, and that dainty piece of dimity, Miss Kitty Pyefinch?—Curse her nankeen countenance! I thought she would have kissed me when I left home, whether I would or not —”

“Nicholas,” said I, “Sir Oliver is as well as I have ever known him to be, together with all his friends, disrespectfully as you may choose

to allude to some of them;—but come, let me question you in my turn:—have you found out—that is—have you ever met again with those ladies whom we saw that evening at the Oratorio, and followed to Jermyn Street?”

“Not I—that is—not to speak to them. I fell in with the young tit indeed yesterday, walking with her bumpkin brother, but I cut them dead—Miss is too die-away for me.—The old girl would be a better speculation by half, if she were not so deuced crummy.”

“But where, my dear Nicholas—where did you meet with that charming—I mean, the girl you speak of?”

“Oh, in the Strand, yesterday morning, and I dare say she visits some people in that elegant neighbourhood, for I saw her go into a house in one of the streets leading from it down towards the river.”

“Which street, my dear Nicholas?”

“No, not Wych Street; one of those on the other side of the way;—I do not know that I can tell you the name of it; but, as you seem so anxious about the business, I dare say

I could point it out to you, — and the house too, for that matter, — to-morrow.”

“Anxious?—no, not at all!—But, seriously, my good fellow, you will lay me under an essential obligation if you can show me the house, as the lady left something in my possession that evening which, as a gentleman, I of course wish to return.”

“Why not go to her own house, then, at once, where we saw her go in with her mother and Master Sappy, after the music?”

“Why, to tell you the truth, Nicholas, I have already called there, and find that is not her residence, but merely the abode of one of her friends.”

“Well, cousin Charles, I will help you, as far as I can, with all my heart. But why so close, man? — Why not say at once that you have taken a fancy to the girl, and want to beat up her quarters?”

It was with no small difficulty that I could command my temper sufficiently to listen to my Cousin’s sarcastic innuendoes, which, through the fear of losing what information he might

be able to give me, I dared not openly resent. He saw his power, and used it most unmercifully, tantalizing and tormenting me all the evening, in the course of which he managed to draw from me the reasons of my so sudden return to town, and my intended intercourse with Lord Manningham's family. At length he quitted me for the night, with a promise of accompanying me early the next morning in pursuit of my lovely fugitive, leaving me, however, still half in doubt whether he had not been all along playing upon my credulity, and whether the whole story of the rencontre in the Strand was not a pure fiction of his own inventing.

Never did night appear so long as that which intervened between this evening of my return and the following morning, which, as I fondly hoped, was destined to crown my wishes with success. I sprang from my bed as soon as the various sounds from below gave notice that the business of the day was commencing; and, having roused my cousin Nicholas, who slept in an adjoining chamber, made a hasty toilet,

and wandered up and down the empty coffee-room till he should join me at breakfast, which I ordered immediately, in anticipation of his instant appearance.

Twenty times had I compared the watch in my hand with the dial in the room,—twenty times had I turned with eagerness to the door, through which Nicholas did *not* enter,—and full as often had I taken up, and laid down again, the Morning Herald, of which I found it impossible at present to read six consecutive lines.—Still he came not.

At last, losing all patience, I once more flew up the stairs that led to his chamber, with strides that would not have disgraced an ogre; I burst into his room, and found him — fast asleep, as he was when I had called him an hour and twelve minutes before. — Human nature could not endure this; so, turning down the bed-clothes, and laying violent hands upon the ewer, I threatened him with a discipline similar to that inflicted on the unlucky pick-pocket, unless he immediately took the necessary measures for accompanying me down

stairs. This Mr. Bullwinkle once more solemnly promised to do; but I was no longer in that state of patient acquiescence which would have enabled me to rest satisfied with his plighted faith. I therefore stationed myself obstinately by his bedside, till the great work of adorning and embellishing his person was completed, an operation which I could not at times help suspecting he took a malicious pleasure in protracting to the latest possible period.

In spite of all his delays, necessary and unnecessary, my Cousin Nicholas was at length accoutred; and, after a breakfast which he seemed to me to be an age in devouring, we started off, arm in arm together, towards the Strand. But here the demon of disappointment still pursued me; Nicholas either could not, or would not, point out the precise street in which he had seen the object of my search; and after leading me in vain up and down every street and lane between Temple Bar and Charing Cross, provokingly asserting as he entered each, that he "was sure he was right at last,"—a prediction, the fallacy of which was proved



the succeeding moment,—he at length fairly confessed that “his recollection had certainly failed him for once, and that he really could not now tell which was the identical street in question,—though he was perfectly sure it must be one of them.”

“Hope deferred,” saith the Wise Man, “maketh the heart sick;” and, completely overcome with that uncomfortable sensation, I made but little resistance to the proposal he now made, that we should adjourn for a while to the nearest coffee-house, and recruit. Many of my readers will recollect one, of a third-rate description, called the Hungerford, long since swept from the face of the earth by the innovating hand of time, but which, at the period of which I am speaking, stood on the north side of the Strand, and nearly faced the market of the same name, which still exists, and retains its appellation; *sed quantum mutatus ab illo!*—Into this asylum did I betake myself, weary and dispirited both in mind and body, and seated myself opposite to my companion, in one of the boxes near the window.

My cousin Nicholas called for a "basin of mock turtle," and I was persuaded to order another, rather with the view of keeping him in countenance, (though I must confess I do not recollect having ever seen him *out* of countenance,) and of whiling away the time till his satiated appetite should enable him to renew the search, than from any inclination on my part to eat. The "*two mocks* for number three" were at length despatched, and I was settling with the slipshod waiter who had brought them,—for my Cousin, as usual, "had no silver,"—when an exclamation from the latter at once took away all my attention.

"There she goes, by G—!" said Nicholas.

"Who?—where?" cried I, turning instantly to the window, and throwing the waiter who had just delivered me the change for a five pound note, twice as much as he demanded.—"As I live and breathe," quoth Nicholas, "she is in that green chariot yonder;" and as he spoke he made for the door.

I gave but one look down the street, saw a showy-looking equipage proceeding at a brisk

pace, and instantly turning, scarce gave myself time to thrust the "flimsies," as Nicholas called the one-pound notes, into my pocket-book that lay on the table, ere I sprang after him.—My Cousin was already in the street.

With a degree of rapidity worthy of notice in the annals of pedestrianism, we made our way along that crowded thoroughfare; the "green chariot" was still in view, and we were fast gaining upon it, when, in crossing what was then the end of St. Martin's Lane, I experienced the truth of that homely but respectable proverb, "The more haste the less speed;" I stumbled and fell.—It was but the delay of a moment; I was instantly on my legs again, and followed the direction which my Cousin declared the chariot had taken, but it was no longer in sight, and we had reached the Opera-House, in breathless precipitation, ere my companion stopped short, and observed, "he was afraid he must have been mistaken after all, and that the carriage had turned down towards Parliament Street."

It was but too true;—we had indeed, in the

sportsman's phrase, "overridden the hounds;" and I was cursing the ill luck that seemed to delight in persecuting me, when a transient glimpse of Nicholas's face for the first time induced a suspicion of his sincerity.—There was in the expression of his countenance a something which conveyed at once to my mind a strong idea, that he had purposely misled me; though wherefore, it was impossible for me to conjecture.

"Bullwinkle!" said I, stopping short, and fixing my eyes upon him, "you are deceiving me. They came not this way, and you know it——"

"Upon my life, I fear so," returned he, in an unembarrassed tone, while his villanous obliquity of vision defied the inquisitorial glance I endeavoured to fix upon his eyes;—"I really think we must be wrong," he continued; "but no matter; a girl like her is easily unkenneled, if a man sets about the search in earnest;—come, come, Stafford, give up the chase for to-day, man. You have plenty of time before you, and a few of the *mopusses*, properly administered, will

soon ferret her out, I warrant you; or, at all events, they will find you another as good.—I should like nothing better than to stay and lend you a helping hand, for this sort of adventure is rather in my way; but,

“Stern Necessity’s severe decree  
No more permits the willing choice to me!”

as Kitty Pyefinch says.—I must be off to Oxford again to-morrow, for I have been *ill* there so long, that, by Jove, they may take it into their infernally compassionate heads to look in and see whether I am alive or not;—so come, a dish of fish, a cutlet, and one bottle of Burgundy to wash it down, and then I leave you to discover and arrange matters, if you can, with this invisible insensible whom you have never seen but once, and prosecute your embryo amour with the delectable cousin whom you have never seen at all.—For me, I am off once more *inter sylvas academi quærere verum.*”

His open, unembarrassed manner staggered, if it did not entirely remove, my suspicions. I was already fatigued with walking the whole of the day, and accompanied him, therefore, the

more readily to the Bedford, resolving to renew my search the next morning, and to leave no stone unturned to accomplish a discovery which, the more that obstacles were thrown in its way, I seemed the more eagerly to desire.

## CHAPTER IX.

If I be I, as I suppose I be,  
I've got a little dog at home, and he knows me :  
If I be I, he will wag his little tail,  
But if I be not I, he will then bark and rail.

LITTLE WOMAN.

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MORE MYSTERY.—AN ARRIVAL.—AN AGREEABLE RENCONTRE.  
—ANOTHER NOT SO AGREEABLE.—SEEING IS NOT ALWAYS  
BELIEVING.—A “ROW.”—WESTWARD HO!—LONG LOOK'D  
FOR, FOUND AT LAST.

ON rising the following morning I found that Nicholas had for once kept faith ; he had already started for Oxford, nor was I at all sorry for the circumstance. Indeed, I could not fail to call to mind the notorious propensity to mischief which he had displayed from a boy

—a propensity which, instead of wearing out and disappearing as he advanced in years, had, as I well knew,

“Grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength.”

The more I considered his conduct during the preceding day, the more I became convinced that I had been his dupe throughout; and that at the very moment when he seemed to be most earnest in assisting my inquiries, he was in reality laughing at me in his sleeve, and enjoying my perplexity and disappointment. His absence, therefore, I felt as a positive relief, rather than as an inconvenience, and I accordingly prepared to renew my researches by myself, deriving added confidence from the want of that very auxiliary on whom I had, only the day before, placed so much dependence. But before I again set out on my Quixotic expedition, busy memory interfered most officiously, and brought to my view, in very prominent colours, the ostensible purpose for which I had returned to London, the plighted promise I had



given to my mother, that I would forthwith seek out my noble uncle and his fair daughter.

Mrs. Stafford would, I knew, be exceedingly anxious to hear of my arrival and domestication in Lord Manningham's family. One day's delay might, fairly enough, be attributed to fatigue, &c. ; but a second would hardly admit of such, or indeed of any, excuse. I, therefore, though not without a feeling of reluctance almost amounting to aversion, determined to go and present my letter of introduction to the "Honourable Amelia Stafford," and her lordly papa. But here I soon found I was reckoning without my host ;—the epistle so carefully indited by my mother, so much more carefully sealed and superscribed by Sir Oliver, and most carefully, as I imagined, deposited by myself within the voluminous folds of a patent pocket-book—was nowhere to be found.

In vain did I ransack the contents of the aforesaid pocket-book, in which I could have ventured to swear I had placed it with my own hand, and whence nothing but the fact of the

book's never having been for one moment out of my possession since my departure from Underdown, could prevent my believing it to have been abstracted.—In vain did I, as it were, eviscerate every fold and every pocket—the letter had totally disappeared.

After a long-continued but fruitless search, I was endeavouring to recollect whether I might not, after all, in the hurry of my return, have left this fateful billet on my dressing-table at the Hall, when the conviction at once struck me that I had, immediately on receiving it from my mother, placed it directly in my pocket-book, together with two others, one from Sir Oliver to his man of business, and one from Miss Kitty Pyefinch,—“favoured by C. Stafford, Esq.”—to a milliner in Barbican, with whom she had some time before scraped an acquaintance at a watering-place, and had since regularly corresponded, once at least in every year, on the subject of the newest fashions. This last-named and most precious charge I had, immediately on my arrival in London, consigned to the vortex of the two-penny post, and now I began to

tremble, lest, inadvertently, I might have committed the missing epistle to the same receptacle ; but this, I soon perceived, could not have been the case, as, on a re-examination, I not only found my uncle's letter to his agent, but also another in the closest juxta-position to it, evidently usurping the place of the deficient billet. This was a supernumerary of which I had no recollection, and was addressed to " James Arbuthnot, Esq., British Coffee-house, Cockspur-Street."

Who on earth Mr. James Arbuthnot could possibly be, or how a letter directed to him could find its way into my pocket, was to me as absolute a mystery as the quadrature of the circle, the determination of the longitude, or the discovery of the philosopher's stone.—There, however, it was,—and, as the seal was already broken, I felt little compunction in intruding upon the privacy of a gentleman who had somehow or other contrived, most unwittingly on my side, to make me a party to his correspondence.

The contents of the letter were as follow :—

“SIR,—I vas to meet you at de Tennis Court on Vensday, as you tell me, about that leetle annuity, bote you vas not come. The business can't be done all so cheap as vat I thought; bote if the gentlemans vas abofe seventy, den I can get my frend to do de *post obit* at twenty-six.

“Yours most obediently,

“AARON XIMENES.

“P. S. — The premiums will only be six and a half.”

Never did response, written or unwritten, from the Pythian Tripod, or any other oracle of antiquity, exercise the wits of curious inquirer more than did this mystic scroll puzzle and perplex my wondering faculties. Difficult as it was to decipher the hieroglyphics themselves, their purport, and, above all, the mode in which they could have insinuated themselves into their present situation, was still more mysterious. The more I racked my brain to account for it, the more bewildered I became. One thing, however, was certain, and, when I came to

reflect more coolly upon the matter, I was not altogether sorry for it. The letter to Lord Manningham was undoubtedly lost, and I therefore hesitated not to avail myself of this circumstance to defer my visit to Grosvenor-Square, contenting myself with writing to my mother, informing her of the occurrence, and requesting that she would cause my room at the Hall to be examined for the missing epistle, and that, in the event of its not being forthcoming, that she would furnish me with a new set of credentials. The time which must necessarily intervene I determined to employ in a renewed and energetic pursuit after my incognita.

I did not in the mean time forget to make inquiries in Cockspur Street after "James Arbutnot, Esq." A gentleman of that name had, as I was told, occasionally slept there, and letters were sometimes left at the bar for him ; but he had not been there lately, nor did they recollect that any letter whatever had been taken in for him for some time. With this information, meagre and unsatisfactory as it was, I was obliged for the present to remain

contented. My mornings were passed in parading the streets, my evenings in visiting various places of amusement, in the vain hope of once more encountering the idol of my imagination. The day passed by on which I might have received an answer from my mother, but it came not, and I rejoiced in the delay. On the fifth evening, I was sitting, as usual, after a long and useless peregrination, execrating my unlucky stars, and revolving a thousand plans, each more visionary than the last, for the attainment of my object, when Sir Oliver Bullwinkle, in his own proper person, entered the coffee-room.

Had the spectre of the revered Sir Roger risen from the superincumbent dust of ages, in all his Norman panoply, and presented himself before me, refulgent in chain mail, I could scarcely have received the visitation with a more theatric start.

That any circumstance at all short of an earthquake, or the stoppage of a country-bank, could have possessed sufficient interest to draw good baronet thirty miles from home, I

could never have conceived — but to the metropolis! — to that scene of villany, fraud, and ignorance! — ay, of ignorance, for “what can people know, that is worth knowing, who never go a-hunting above once a-year, and then only on an Easter Tuesday in a haekney-coach!” — This had frequently formed a favourite theme of discourse for my uncle on a winter’s evening, at Underdown Hall, especially after the news contained in some recent missive from Miss Kitty’s city correspondent had been duly detailed and commented upon by that erudite fair. Much then did I marvel at seeing the baronet, despite the sovereign contempt he ever felt and expressed for them, thus mixing with the “ignoramuses” of London; and not a little did I speculate upon the magnitude of that cause which could operate to the voluntary introduction of his person among so barbarous a race.

But the half ironical smile which had begun to contract the corners of my mouth expanded at once into an expression of the most unfeigned gratitude, when I found that the

moral convulsion which had divorced the kind soul from his Household Gods, and plunged him thus headlong into scenes which he abominated, was neither more nor less than the anxiety which he felt for the welfare of my unworthy self. The receipt of my letter had caused much consternation at the Hall; that from my mother to Lord Manningham could nowhere be found in the places which I had desired might be searched; and my affectionate parent had determined, after a long and fruitless inquiry on the subject, on recommencing her task, when, to the utter surprise of herself and everybody else, Sir Oliver suddenly announced his resolution of being the bearer of it.

“The boy,” he said, “was clearly not able to make his way in town like a man — every one might have seen, too, when he was last down at the Hall, that his wits were *gone wool-gathering* — and he would go and see him well through the business himself.” It is needless to say that his offer was accepted with the liveliest gratitude by a mother anxious for the well-being of her child, though more than a



doubt would sometimes cross her mind, if her brother's personal interference could, in the present case at least, contribute to it; but the good-humoured eagerness to be of service to me which he displayed, and the vehement invectives he launched forth against the villany and temptations of London in the abstract, (of which in the detail he had about as much knowledge and experience as a child of four years old, or a native of Timbuctoo,) made Mrs. Stafford contented, nay, even anxious that he should set out forthwith to cover me with his protecting ægis, and ward off the dangers with which the loss of so valuable an article as a letter of introduction declared me necessarily to be surrounded.—My poor Uncle was about as well fitted for the task of guiding a youth through the labyrinthian ways of London, as of being Mufti to the Sublime Porte; but he thought otherwise, and his motives were the kindest and most affectionate.—Peace be with his ashes!

With much circumlocution, and an air of fatherly protection,—to me, who knew the wor-

thy baronet's habits so well, irresistibly ludicrous, — he communicated his intentions in coming to London, and, felicitating both me and himself most warmly on his having so readily met with me, expressed his determination of taking a quiet pipe and a tankard, as he had dined upon the road, and of postponing matters of business until the morrow.

There was much, however, in this arrangement of Sir Oliver's objectionable, not to say impracticable. In the first place, not even a cigar (to say nothing of tobacco-pipes) was allowed in the room, nor was "a tankard" much more accessible; besides, the social "dish of chat" with me, which he seemed to consider an appendage of course, would have interfered very materially with the plan I had already chalked out for the evening. Notwithstanding my numerous disappointments, hope had not yet entirely forsaken me; and I had fully resolved on visiting one, at least, of the theatres, as usual, in the faint expectation of being able to recover among the audience some trace of the beautiful phantom which had hitherto eluded

me. I had nothing for it, therefore, but to state plainly to Sir Oliver the impossibility of his gratifying himself at present in the manner proposed, and to solicit his joining me in a cup of coffee, and subsequent adjournment to Drury Lane; after which I pledged myself to accompany him to a place where, amidst less sophisticated souls, he might solace himself to satiety with his favourite beverage and amusement. With much the same sort of surly acquiescence as that with which a traveller surrenders to a footpad the purse he has no means of withholding, Sir Oliver, finding me positive, gave a grumbling assent, and to Drury Lane we proceeded.

Many years had elapsed since the baronet had visited the interior of a London theatre, and the brilliancy of the lights, the elegance of the house, the beauty of the scenery and decorations, together with the business of the stage, had an effect almost bewildering upon his faculties. Mine, too, were scarcely more at liberty, since, in hearing and replying to his various remarks and multifarious questions, my

own senses were so completely occupied as to leave a person less interested than myself little leisure or opportunity for the scrutiny which was my real inducement to attend the performance. By degrees, indeed, in listening to and answering Sir Oliver's very *original* observations, the main purpose of my coming had almost faded from my memory, when it was at once most forcibly brought to my recollection by an apparition in an opposite box, which acted upon me with the effect of a galvanic battery.—This was the gaunt figure of the ever-to-be-abominated Mrs. Morgan, seated in close confabulation with the supposed mamma of my unknown charmer, in a front row on the second tier.

Not a little to the astonishment, and the very visible dismay, of Sir Oliver, I cut him hastily short in an elaborate harangue on the wonderful properties of gas, and the ingenuity of its, then recent, introduction into our national theatres, and briefly telling him that I had just caught sight of a college acquaintance, in an opposite box, whom I particularly wished to

speak to, begged his excuse for a few minutes, while I should make to my friend a communication of some consequence; then, pledging myself to rejoin him in a quarter of an hour at farthest, I gave him no time to utter the objection I saw already hovering on his lips, but bowed and left him, running, with all the eagerness of a boy after a butterfly, towards the place which contained the object of my pursuit.

Never did weary palmer, after a long and laborious pilgrimage, enter the shrine of his patron Saint with more of satisfaction, awe, and reverence, than filled my palpitating bosom, as I seated myself behind Mrs. Morgan and her friend.—A significant glance passed between them as I entered, and, with a voice faltering from emotion, paid my compliments to both. My reception from either party was sufficiently cool to have rebuffed any one who had less imperious motives for cultivating an acquaintance. Their replies to my remarks, and congratulations upon their good looks, were cold, constrained, and barely within the bounds of

civility; while the sarcastic expression of Mrs. Morgan's eye, when I at last hazarded an inquiry to her companion after the health of "the young lady whom I had once had the happiness of seeing in her company," showed me at once that the motives of my attentions were, by her at least, duly appreciated.

I failed not also to perceive that this question put the good lady to whom it was addressed into no small flutter; she fumed and fidgeted, and appeared so uneasy during every allusion I made to the subject of our former meeting, and evaded giving me any direct answer so very inartificially, that I no longer imagined, what I had never indeed entirely believed, that any maternal ties, at all events, existed between her and my charmer; I felt convinced, on the contrary, that a secret of some kind or other, and evidently one very burdensome in the keeping, prevented her from giving me all the information I required. I employed all the address I was master of to overcome their undisguised dislike to my society, and by my perseverance had at length so far succeeded

in thawing the ice, even of the frosty-faced Morgan, as to induce her to reply to my remarks in a tone which might almost have been considered as approaching to civility; I had begun to flatter myself that I should obtain by sap what had defied my efforts at storming — I had actually gained so much as to discover that the name of my friend on the left hand was Wilkinson, and that she filled the important situation of housekeeper in a family of rank at the “West End of the Town” — when a bustle in the box which I had quitted forcibly drew off my attention. A momentary glance was sufficient to satisfy me that the principal actor in the disturbance was Sir Oliver Bullwinkle.

That he was engaged in a serious dispute with some one, the vehemence of the good Baronet’s gesticulation would not allow me to doubt, while now and then an upper note of his, audible in preponderating shrillness, above all the forcible recommendations to “Turn ’em out!” and “Throw ’em over!” — generally applied on such occasions by the denizens of the upper regions, in the forlorn hope of transferring objects

of annoyance from themselves to their friends below,—confirmed the fact. The person of the antagonist who appeared to have drawn down upon himself such a torrent of wrath and vituperation from the exasperated Baronet, was concealed from my view by the intervening bystanders, some of whom seemed, by their gestures, inclined to take an active part in the fray. Every feeling of my mind naturally revolted against seeing my Uncle, although, as I knew, “himself a host,” thus matched single-handed against such apparently fearful odds, and I hastened to his assistance, first apologizing to my new friends for my abruptness in quitting them, and begging permission to return and escort them home at the conclusion of the performance.

Whether my very polite offer met with acceptance or denial, I am unable to say, as at that moment I fancied I saw Sir Oliver’s arm raised in the act of striking, and, without waiting to distinguish the answer, I closed the box-door, and ran off.

On arriving at the supposed scene of combat, I found I was just too late for the fray: my



uncle's opponent, having been carried off by a friend just as the dispute had reached its climax, was already descending one of the staircases that led to the lobbies. I saw nothing of his person, save that a casual glance showed me a figure wrapped up in a light-coloured riding-coat, while some broken exclamations, uttered either by himself or his companion, respecting the "old fellow's infernal impudence," were alone distinguishable.

A considerable degree of confusion still prevailed within the box, and, as Sir Oliver's safety was my first object, to that point I of course directed my attention. I found the Baronet, with a face as red as a peony, fuming and perspiring at every pore, while, with all the vehemence of a Methodist preacher at a country wake, he was alternately remonstrating and insisting on his right to chastise some one who appeared to have incurred the heaviest weight of his displeasure, and this to the great amusement of a portion of his audience, and the marked indignation of others.—As his eye fell upon me, he changed the object of his attack.

“So, sir, here you are at last! This is your ten minutes, is it? Why were you not here, sir, to have broken that puppy’s neck?”

“Be calm, my dear Sir Oliver, let me beg you to be calm; consider where you are, and—”

“Consider the d—l, sir.—Calm! I will never be calm again.—I have a right to be in a passion, and I will. Abuse me like a pickpocket! —threaten to pull my nose — a Bullwinkle’s nose! — I’ll massacre the rascal, I’ll ——”

“My dear uncle, pray let me persuade you to withdraw; your antagonist is gone already: in a fitter place we can talk this matter over, and if any one has insulted you ——”

“Insulted me! — didn’t I tell you he swore he would pull my nose? — threatened to horse-whip me?”

“Well, well, uncle, pray let us retire; this person, whoever he may be, is undoubtedly to be found, and doubt not but I shall be ready ——”

“You be ready? — you be d—! — Found! What, I suppose you too mean to join in the

plot to persuade me out of my senses — you too mean to confederate with that imp of the devil's begetting, Nicholas, to drive me mad !”

“ Indeed, Sir, I do not ; I know nothing of my Cousin's plans, nor do I see how he can be at all concerned in the present business, as he is now at Oxford.”

“ It 's a lie — it 's an infernal lie — the scoundrel ! — it was Nick, and I 'll swear it.—But I 'll work the dog ! — D— him ! I 'll disinherit him—I 'll not leave him so much land as would fill a flower-pot — a rascal ! horsewhip me ! pull my nose !”

I was thunderstruck ! My Cousin Nicholas then was the object of all this excess of indignation — but it was impossible — Nicholas, with all his addiction to mischief, could never have gone such lengths as Sir Oliver spoke of ; besides, I was morally certain that he had now been at Oxford more than a week. At all events the point to be gained at present was to get my uncle away ; and this, partly through the assistance of Sir John Allaby, a college

friend who had once accompanied me on a visit to the Hall, and who at this period joined me, I at length succeeded in accomplishing.

We adjourned to the New Hummums, Sir Oliver absolutely foaming with rage, like a fresh-drawn bottle of his favourite Edinburgh ale in the dog-days. He was, indeed, "*completely up.*" Having obtained a private room, and ordered some refreshment, I allowed my Uncle's fury some time to evaporate in, before I hazarded a question as to the origin of his discomposure. After a slight repast, at which the Baronet, in spite of his anger, played his part to admiration, a plentiful supply of his favourite beverage soothed him into some degree of returning mansuetude, till the ebullition of his fury at length "in hollow murmurs died away."

Then, and not till then, did I venture a query as to the particulars of his adventure, and learned, amidst many interruptions, occasioned by his oft rekindling ire, that I had not quitted his side five minutes before a person in a drab riding-frock entered the box, whom Sir Oliver, notwithstanding his dress, which was cut in the

very extreme of the fashion, his dark mustaches and military spurs, at once recognised as his own son.

“Nick!” cried Sir Oliver in amaze, “Nick,—can I believe my eyes?—What the d—l are you doing here, Sir, when I believed you to be hard at your studies?—Nick, I say, come back directly, you rascal, and answer me?”

The gentleman whom he addressed, having merely cast a cursory glance round the theatre, was retiring, when the latter part of the Baronet’s speech caught his attention;—for an instant he paused, half turning to a friend who leaned upon his arm, as if under the impression that the words must have been directed to him, but seeing no indication in his countenance of that having been the case, he once more faced about, and asked, in a tone of astonishment, “Did you address yourself to me, sir?”

“To you, sir? ay, to be sure—whom else do you think I spoke to? I tell you what, Nick—”

“Really, sir, you have the advantage of me,” interrupted the other; “I do not recollect that

I have ever had the honour of your acquaintance."

"Why, you impertinent puppy!" thundered Sir Oliver, lost in amaze at what he conceived to be the unparalleled impudence of his own offspring,—“do you mean to deny me? Do you mean to tell me to my face that you are not my son, Nicholas Bullwinkle?”

“Upon my word, sir, I lament to say that I am not fortunate enough to possess so mild and engaging a papa,” returned his antagonist, whose surprise at this attack seemed now to be fast merging in the amusement he began to derive from it; “and I much fear,” added he, “that even if I were inclined to admit your claim to paternity, and to solicit your blessing in the hope of soon enjoying a thumping legacy, my mamma would by no means be disposed to sanction your pretensions, being, as she is, already provided with a respectable elderly gentleman, whom she has long since honoured with the title of Lord and Master, and complimented as the author of my being.—Eh? Sybthorpe, what think you?”

“Ho ! ho ! ho ! Famous, Tommy, ’pon honour !” shouted Mr. Sybthorpe.

Horace has with great truth, as well as shrewdness, observed, that

“Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus ;”

and my Uncle, in this trying moment, confirmed the truth of the poet’s testimony. Had any one *told* Sir Oliver that his son Nicholas had slipped away from college, and taken a clandestine trip to London, in all probability the account would have been received without much manifestation of surprise, and with no great degree of indignation against what, if we may draw any inference from his usual mode of reasoning on hearing of any of my Cousin’s freaks, he would, in all probability, have considered as a youthful frolic, not altogether unbecoming a “lad of spirit.” But when he found himself, as he supposed, most unexpectedly brought into immediate contact with him in the very act of his delinquency, and, above all, laughed at, absolutely disowned, and, to use a favourite phrase of

his own, "made quite a May-game of" by his lively offspring; — when, too, it is recollected that he, in general, only approved of, and smiled at, Nicholas's flights of fancy, so long as his wit was directed against others, it need occasion no surprise if his anger now knew no bounds, but amounted almost to frenzy. It was with difficulty he found words to express his feelings with, but when they did come forth, they rushed along in an animated flow of overbearing eloquence, as the long pent-up torrent, having once surmounted the barriers opposed to it, springs forward with tenfold energy from the temporary restraint it has experienced. Stunning as was its effect, the stranger, whom he persisted in calling his son, once more met him in midway, but his countenance had now lost the ironical gravity which gave point to his last speech, and assumed a severer cast, as he exclaimed, "Hold, Mr. Bullwinkle, if that be your name.—I see your mistake, and can pardon it, as it seems to arise from a resemblance, real or fancied, between myself and some member of your family. On



that account, as well as in consideration of your age and respectable appearance, I can excuse the language which you have just suffered to escape your lips; but, Sir, it must not be repeated. If you wish to know my name, it is Hanbury, Sir — Captain Hanbury, of the Coldstream Guards ——”

“It is a lie! — it’s Nicholas Bullwinkle, and nothing else,” roared Sir Oliver, half mad with passion — “but I’ll be even with you, you scoundrel; I’ll disinherit you, you ungrateful dog; I’ll cut you off with a shilling; I’ll ——”

“Silence! old madman,” cried the now angry officer; “another such word, and not even your years shall protect your shoulders from my horsewhip, or your nose from an application that may bring you to your senses!”

This was too bad; and the Baronet, in the excess of his rage, raised his cane, but the impending blow was immediately intercepted by the spectators, who now interfered, and compelled Sir Oliver to desist, while Captain Hanbury, though not a little irritated, was prevailed upon by his friend Sybthorpe and others,

just as I came up, to withdraw, nor continue an altercation with an old man, who was either mad or drunk; and one which could not but end discreditably to all concerned, if it were any farther pursued.

The principal part of these particulars I drew from Sir John Allanby, who, from an adjoining box, had witnessed a great part of the dispute; for Sir Oliver, though his wrath was somewhat abated, in the violence of its expression at least, was still too angry to give anything like a connected account of the *fracas*.

Two things struck me as being very unaccountable in this business, nor, after cool consideration, could I come to any decided opinion upon the merits of the case. In the first place, it was exceedingly improbable that a father could have been so deceived by any common similarity of person as to pronounce, and persist in declaring, an absolute stranger to be his only son; that in figure, in voice, in countenance, (barring the whiskers, which might have been assumed,) the resemblance should be so perfect as to impose upon one so well qualified

to judge of the identity, was hardly to be conceived. — And yet, on the other hand, every other circumstance tended to support the probability that a strong personal likeness had indeed deceived Sir Oliver. The whole conduct of the individual attacked was precisely that of a man mistaken for another of whom he has no knowledge; and his behaviour, though on such a supposition it might even be entitled to the praise of forbearance, was still not such as a son, however well inclined he might be to carry on a deception of the kind, could be imagined capable of practising towards a parent. It was impossible to believe that even Nicholas could threaten to violate the sanctity of a father's person, or dare to menace his gray hairs with indignity and outrage. Then, too, the name — Captain Hanbury, if such he were, had made no secret of his rank and character, while the proximity of the honourable corps of which he professed himself a member, laid him open, if an impostor, to almost immediate detection.

This last argument, I must confess, weighed

most strongly with me, as I could not bring myself to believe that the natural sagacity of Nicholas would ever allow him to commit himself so far as to assume a name, his pretensions to which might be so easily and so soon disproved. At my suggestion, after the matter had been pretty well canvassed, the Army List for the month was procured from the coffee-room, and examined, and there certainly, among the number of lieutenants in the Coldstream, all bearing of course the rank of captain, stood the name of Thomas Walton Hanbury. This fact tended much to incline me towards the latter opinion; and Sir Oliver himself, now that the object of his wrath was removed from his view, was, as I could see, staggered, especially when Allanby, repeating the name two or three times over, as if to aid some faded recollection, declared that he had a vague idea of having somewhere or other either met with, or heard of, a Captain Hanbury of the Guards, and that the impression upon his mind was, that the person who bore that name was a young man of family and honour, though said to be rather too much

addicted to enjoying, in their fullest extent, the pleasures afforded by the metropolis.

At this account, Sir Oliver, in whose opinion Sir John held a high rank, became evidently more thoughtful and embarrassed. At length he exclaimed,—“I’ll tell you what, nephew Charles, nothing on earth but my own eyes shall ever convince me that the jackanapes who threatened to pull my nose two hours ago, was not my Nick! — But I’ll be resolved: — Yes, before I utterly send him to the d—l, I’ll be resolved. I’ll hamper the puppy. My determination is taken.— By daybreak to-morrow, I’ll be off to Oxford, and, wo betide the rascal, if I find that he has been outside the College gates for this month past!”

There is a particular breed of animals, which courtesy forbids me to name, proverbial for the resistance they oppose to any one who would lead or drive them. Sir Oliver, when his resolution was once taken, was scarcely less persevering than the most obstinate porker of them all. In vain did I suggest the avowed reason of his coming to town, and the anxiety I

laboured under to be properly introduced to Lord Manningham, though, sooth to say, I was not altogether sorry for what I considered as at least a respite, if not a reprieve. My Uncle was positive; and after having opposed him as long as I thought decency required, I was at length obliged to acquiesce in his determination. He put into my hands the re-written letter of my mother, which he told me I might present myself on the morrow if I pleased; and I heard him, with no small satisfaction, on our return to the hotel, order a post-chaise to be in readiness the next morning at five o'clock, to carry him the first stage on his way to Alma Mater. When I rose the next day, I found that he had been gone four hours, and was by that time about half-way on the road to the place of his destination.

Let not the reader think, meanwhile, that I had forgotten my engagement with Mesdames Wilkinson and Morgan. Far from it. I had taken advantage of a temporary cessation in the conversation, while Sir Oliver was deeply

engaged with his lobster, and leaving Allanby to entertain him, had slipped back to the theatre, in order to keep my appointment. But I might have well saved myself the trouble, inasmuch as the parties I was in quest of had already quitted the house, not wishing, in all probability, to avail themselves of the services of so forward a cavalier as myself. This, however, gave me much less disturbance than it otherwise would have done, as I was now in possession of the name and occupation of Mrs. Wilkinson, and felt little doubt but that, with such a clew, a very trifling degree of patience and perseverance would enable me to ascertain her abode. I therefore returned, and rejoined the two Baronets, having been hardly missed by either the one or the other.

Full of newly-raised hopes from the auspicious rencontre of the preceding evening, I was despatching my breakfast with much more deliberation and satisfaction than I had done of late, when the waiter delivered me a letter, just brought in by the two-penny post, and, as far

as I could decipher the hieroglyphics which composed the superscription, intended for myself. It was addressed to

“ Mustar Stuffart,

“ Taffystork Hothell,

“ Coffin Garding.”

and contained the following communication :

“ SUR,

“ I haf fund out hoo the ladies you nose about ham, han wear they is ; han this is hall I dares to sey, for fire of haccidence ; but hif you wil com to wear your nose, han wring has husal, you shal larn more frum

“ Your loven Sarvant

“ tell deth,

“ SARY JENNENS.”

“ Sicks a’clock,  
“ Vensday hafternone.”

Never did that egregious antiquary, Thomas Hearne, chuckle with greater delight over a newly-deciphered Celtic inscription, than did I on unravelling the hidden meaning of this, to me, most precious of manuscripts.—I kissed the



dear dirty piece of paper, and delicious pot-hooks, a thousand times ; and scarcely did that favourite device of Cupid's signet, the deep indentation of the thimble-top on the half-masticated wafer, escape the same vivid token of my regard. I could not doubt but that my better Genius had at length surmounted the various provoking obstacles thrown in his way by the demon of mischance, and that I was at last to be made happy with the intelligence I had so long and so eagerly desired to obtain. Oh ! how I blessed the happy quarrel of the preceding evening, which, by so opportunely removing Sir Oliver from the scene of action, left me free as air to follow the dictates of my own inclination, without the interruption and restraint which his presence would necessarily have imposed. I lost not a moment in repairing to Jermyn Street, nor did Miss Jennens keep me long in suspense. She told me that all her endeavours to discover who the ladies were, or whence they came, had been ineffectual till the day before, when, to her great joy, the elder of them came once more in a hackney-coach,

to call on Mrs. Morgan ; that on her going up stairs, she, Sally, had taken an opportunity of questioning the coachman as to the place whence he had brought his fare. A proffered pot of the infusion of molasses and *coccus Indicus*, by courtesy termed beer, rendered honest Jarvis communicative, and obtained her the information she wanted. He had brought the lady from No. 84 in Grosvenor Square, where she lived, as he inferred from what fell from one of the servants who put her into the coach, in the capacity of housekeeper. Sally added, that after taking tea together, the lady and Mrs. Morgan had gone to the play, whence they returned earlier than usual in a coach ; that “ the lady ” did not then get out, but merely set her companion down ; after which, my informant distinctly heard the order given to “ drive to 84, Grosvenor Square.”

While Sally Jennens was finishing her account, my hands were already employed in rummaging my pocket-book for the letter which had been, the evening before, given to me by my Uncle. It was readily found, and I hastily

reperused its address. — I was before sure I could not have mistaken it. — It was the same — “To the Right Hon. Viscount Manningham, Grosvenor Square, London,” with the magic number, “84,” legibly inscribed in the O.P. angle. — The very house!

Closely did I cross-examine the chambermaid respecting her certainty of the correctness of the number. The girl was positive, and her testimony was repeated with the firmness of a Jew qualifying for bail at the Old Bailey, while I hardly knew whether to hope or fear that her story might be true in all its parts. She persisted, however, that she had heard the number distinctly on both occasions, and that she could not be mistaken. I gave her a reward, which produced me in return a curtsey down to the ground, and retired, exceedingly mystified and much puzzled as to my future mode of proceeding.

Was it possible that my fair incognita was indeed domesticated with Mrs. Wilkinson, and residing under Lord Manningham’s roof? — and, if so, in what capacity? — or was she but

a friend of the housekeeper, who had taken her to the theatre?—Could it be that she was Miss Stafford herself?—The idea startled as it struck me, but I dismissed it sorrowfully from my mind as unlikely, and indeed absurd. The utter improbability that the Honourable Amelia Stafford, the admired heiress of one of the most wealthy and respected noblemen in the three kingdoms, should accompany a domestic to the pit at Covent Garden; or that, even if she were inclined so to commit herself, her father, whose notions of decorum and etiquette, especially where females were concerned, were remarkably rigid—that *he* should permit so great a violation of both, and that, too, without any adequate motive—it was not possible to believe it.

One circumstance alone seemed at the first view to favour the supposition. A carriage, it appeared, attended too by servants, had called on the eventful evening when I first saw the party, and conveyed them away from Mrs. Morgan's;—but I had omitted to inquire whether it had in the first instance carried them

there, and for the servants of gentlemen in London to make use of the carriages of their masters, after setting them down at their various engagements, and to employ the said carriages during the interval, at the expiration of which their attendance would be again required, was, as I well knew, no uncommon occurrence.

Or it might be, that this young lady was the daughter of some person in a respectable station in life, and intrusted temporarily to Mrs. Wilkinson's care — a supposition which was much strengthened by the marked deference which I could not fail to remark in the good woman's behaviour towards her, and which had first given rise to the idea that the parties were not connected by any ties of consanguinity; this idea, too, derived added confirmation from certain points in Mrs. Wilkinson's demeanour when I encountered her for the second time. All these conjectures, however, led to no satisfactory termination, nor could I draw any certain conclusion from combining them. As to the booby who made the third person in the party, I easily ascertained from Sally that he

was a son of Mrs. Morgan's, and a junior clerk in one of the public offices.

Deeply immersed in cogitation, as I wandered through the now crowded streets, scarcely knowing whither I was walking, my feet seemed instinctively to convey me towards the quarter whither my thoughts had already strayed, and I found myself, all at once, perambulating the northern side of Grosvenor Square.

The door of an elegant mansion in the angle nearest to me stood open; a respectable-looking man-servant, in a plain suit, was in the entrance, while two others, in handsome liveries of green and gold, were employed in opening the door of a fashionable, dark-green, town-chariot, (the panels of which were simply ornamented by a plain crest, surmounted by a viscount's coronet,) and assisting its occupants to alight. A tall, gentlemanly-looking personage, in an undress military blue frock, with his hair *en queue*, and his striking figure a little bowed by age, stepped out first, and turning, offered his hand to facilitate the descent of a beautifully-formed female figure, whose plain white satin

spencer, and Spanish hat of the same delicate material, exhibited to advantage a person cast in the truest mould of elegance and grace. As she tripped lightly into the hall, she half turned to adjust some little derangement of her dress ; and one glimpse only, hastily caught beneath the snowy plume that vibrated gracefully above her polished brow, was sufficient to impress upon my mind the recollection of a countenance which, once seen, could never again be eradicated from my memory.—It was herself,—radiant in excess of loveliness, and looking, if possible, even more beautiful than when I had last beheld her.—I hastened forward, unconscious of what I purposed ;—but it was too late. The door had already closed, and shut her from my view.

“ Lord Manningham’s carriage, I believe ?” said I to the servant, who was now mounting the box, after having drawn up the blinds of the chariot, and closed the door.

“ It is, sir,” he replied, respectfully touching his hat, and in a moment the vehicle was out of sight.

I could no longer doubt.—This then was the beautiful Amelia Stafford!—the fair being who was already prepared to look with so favourable an eye upon the addresses of her unknown admirer, and who was already the idolized object of that favoured and happy mortal!—I hesitated no more; doubt, fear, and anxiety, at once gave way before the renovating warmth of love, as the dews of morn before the rising beams of a brilliant summer sun.

The urgency of my summons brought a servant immediately to the door.

“Inform Lord Manningham,” said I, “that Mr. Charles Stafford requests to be admitted to his presence.”—I heard the man deliver the message at a door which opened from the entrance hall to a breakfast-parlour on the right. The recollection of my gallant father, whose beloved brother would so soon press me to his heart, kindled my enthusiasm, and filled my young bosom with ten thousand nameless emotions. I had already advanced half across the hall, in my eagerness to grasp the hand of a relative who had evinced such noble sentiments,



such generous intentions, in my favour, burning to meet his paternal caresses with a due return of correspondent warmth, when I heard these words issue from the interior of the room towards which I was advancing, as they were delivered to the servant who had announced me, and who yet stood with the door half-open in his hand —

“ Mr. Charles Stafford !—Turn the scoundrel out of the house instantly, and never suffer him to enter these doors again ! ! ”

## CHAPTER X.

Obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit.”

VIRG.

In amaze

I gaze,

And in all sorts of ways

Stands my hair,—when my voice I endeavour to raise

I find through my jaws I can't squeeze it !

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A “ PRETTY PARTICULAR HANDSOME FIX.”—ASTONISHMENT.  
—INDIGNATION —TWO LETTERS, AND ONE ANSWER.

READER, if thou art a sportsman, thou hast doubtless often seen, in some fine thick stubble of newly reaped wheat, or equally attractive covert of umbrageous turnip, the well-trained Don, or stanchest Ponto, check himself suddenly in full career, and become, on the instant, fixed, immovable ; every limb and muscle

stretched to its utmost tension, and scarcely exhibiting any sign of life.

Or if — as I would fain flatter myself may be the case — if thou art some amiable and accomplished young lady, who, despite the warning voice of “Mamma,” and the harsher remonstrances of “Papa,” art in the habit of soothing the soft sorrows of thy sentimental soul by the perusal of the last new novel, to while away the tedious moments until “the Captain” calls — then hast thou, as undoubtedly, in the course of thy studies, fallen in with that wonderful account of the Petrified City, in which men, women, children, dogs, cats, old maids, and other domestic animals, are described as standing transformed to stone, each in the precise attitude which it had assumed at the moment of the miraculous and sudden metamorphosis.

This city, by the way, certain modern travellers assure us, is still *in esse*, and to be found somewhere between Tunis and Timbuctoo, though none of them, as far as I can find, have actually made their bivouac within its precincts.

Or if thou art of “the Livery,” Reader, then hast thou, perchance, beheld the Alderman of thy Ward, at my Lord Mayor’s feast, with fixed eye and dropping jaw-bone, sink back into his elbow-chair, after his ninth basin of callipee.

Or if thou art a Bachelor of Arts, thou hast read, it may be, (for I would not hazard an assertion rashly,) of the singular properties of the Gorgon’s head,—and of the Knaresborough Well that turned an elderly gentleman’s wig into stone in fifteen seconds.

If, unhappily, thou art none of all these, then must I despair of conveying to thy mind anything like a correct idea of the absolute immobility of form and feature,—the utter suspension of animation which paralysed all my faculties, as sounds so unexpected and inauspicious struck thus suddenly on my sensorium!—nor had I in any degree recovered myself, when the servant, a respectable-looking man, having closed the parlour-door, returned and informed me, in a hesitating tone, “His Lordship had commanded him to say, that neither at present, nor at any

future period, would it be convenient for him to receive the visits of Mr. Charles Stafford.”

Aghast as I was, I at length recovered myself so far as to reply, that I was confident there must be some mistake in the matter, as I had come on Lord Manningham’s own express invitation, and was indeed his Lordship’s nephew. The man firmly, but respectfully, replied, that he was certain no mistake had been committed in the name, and that his Lord’s orders were peremptory. Not choosing therefore to enter into an altercation with a servant, and, indeed, but too well convinced, by the evidence of my own ears, that the man had softened, rather than aggravated the harshness of the message of which he was the bearer, I quitted the house, and regained the street. in a state of confusion, arising from mingled anger, mortification, and disappointment at once pitiable and ludicrous.

“So then !” I exclaimed at last, when a five minutes’ perambulation of Brook Street had furnished me with breath sufficient to form into

articulate sounds — “ So then ! this is the ‘ paternal reception ’ — this is the fulfilment of those ‘ generous intentions in my favour,’ which my kind but deceived mother has sent me up to London to experience !—A mighty courteous and ‘ fatherly reception,’ truly ! — But this business rests not here ; I will probe this infamous mockery to the bottom, and, were he twenty times my uncle, Lord Manningham shall repent the unprovoked insult he has dared offer to a Stafford.”

My indignation having once found vent in words, relieved itself in some degree by the use of them ; but, as passion subsided, my astonishment revived and increased.

What could be the meaning of the treatment I had received ?—Was it possible that Lord Manningham, a nobleman of grave and dignified habits, one whose reputation for the possession of every accomplishment that adorns the gentleman, the soldier, and the scholar, stood unimpeachable,—that a man who had always professed, and, as I had every reason to believe, felt, the strongest and most disinterested regard

for his deceased brother—that *he* should wantonly, and without provocation, go out of his way, merely for the purpose of wounding the feelings and disgracing the character of that brother's only child—of one, too, who, neither in fact nor by implication, could ever have given him offence, and to whose very person he was a stranger?—It was altogether unaccountable—was incredible—and the longer I reflected, the more convinced did I feel that some mystery enveloped the whole transaction, the intricacies of which I was at present completely incompetent to unravel. The more I pondered upon the circumstance of my extraordinary exclusion from Grosvenor Square, the more certain this inference appeared, when at once the question occurred, Had I been traduced?—had any villain, envious of my rising prospects, aspersed my character, and painted me, perhaps, to my rigidly correct relation, in all the sombre colours of his own malignity?—But even then, was I to be condemned unheard?—Were all the partial representations of a fond and anxious mother, eager to promote the success of a be-

loved son, to sink at once before the suggestions of a comparative stranger, without any room allowed for investigation or inquiry?—Could my uncle be displeased at my having so long delayed to avail myself of his invitation?—I could hardly think that, in such a case, he would, without leaving any opening for explanation or apology, inflict a punishment so glaringly disproportionate to the offence.

On the whole, I could not but conclude that, either from some misapprehension, or the malicious interference of an enemy, Lord Manningham had been induced to credit some report, highly derogatory to my character, which, on every account, it behoved me to clear up. Unwilling, therefore, as I was, to agitate my mother unnecessarily, I resolved to forbear at present from writing to the Hall, and to employ the interval between the present time and Sir Oliver's expected return from Oxford in the elucidating, if possible, this strange occurrence.

As a preliminary step, I took the first opportunity, on reaching the Tavistock, to despatch a porter to Grosvenor Square with the following letter :—



“Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden.

“MY LORD,

“After the very extraordinary and mortifying repulse which I experienced at your door this morning, nothing but a sense of what is due to myself, and to those with whose friendship and affection I am honoured, could have induced me to trouble your Lordship any farther.

“In what that very cavalier repulse, as unexpected as undeserved, could have originated, I am at a loss to imagine. I take leave, however, to remind your Lordship that I presented myself on your own express and unsolicited invitation, and that the letter, of which I was the bearer, from the honoured widow of the late Colonel Stafford, might at least, I should conceive, have secured her son from insult or contempt.

“The only way in which I can account for such treatment, is the supposition, that malevolent and slanderous tongues may have dared to misrepresent some motive or action of my life, without my being aware of it. If this be the case, from my father’s brother I entreat as

a favour, and from Lord Manningham I demand as a right, an opportunity of vindicating my conduct.

“ In the firm belief that the unpleasant circumstance, to which I allude, must have had its source in mistake or calumny, I have the honour to subscribe myself,

“ My Lord,

“ Your Lordship’s very obedient

“ Nephew and Servant,

“ CHARLES STAFFORD.”

“ To the Right Hon. The Viscount Manningham,  
Grosvenor Square.”

The interval which necessarily elapsed between the despatch of this epistle and the reception of the eagerly expected answer, would have been a severe trial to my patience, but for the appearance of a visitor, whose presence and communication served, in some degree, to fill up the pause, and to abstract from the tediousness of time. This visitor was Allanby, whom, on parting with him the night before, I had requested to gain any information he might be

able to procure, that would tend to throw a light upon my Uncle's mysterious adventure at Drury Lane.

Sir John had good-humouredly promised to comply with my wishes, and now assured me that there was every reason to suppose that Sir Oliver had really been mistaken in the person of the gentleman with whom he had so decidedly claimed consanguinity.

On inquiry, he had ascertained from an officer of the Coldstream, with whom he had a family connection, not only that Captain Hanbury, of that very distinguished regiment, had been in London on the previous evening, but also that he had actually been at the theatre, and had afterwards, at the Guards' Club-House, given to some of his friends, in the informant's hearing, an animated account of a "famous good row" which he had just had at the play-house, the particulars of which Sir John's relative had not had sufficient curiosity to attend to.

In consequence of this intelligence, Allanby, decided as he now considered the matter to be, resolved on availing himself of an introduction,

readily offered by his friend, when he had explained his reason for wishing for one, and on calling upon the gallant Captain, ostensibly for the purpose of making excuses in Sir Oliver's name for the mistake into which he had unadvisedly fallen, and thus to put the matter beyond dispute. On reaching his lodgings in Albemarle Street, however, he found that Captain Hanbury had started, a few hours before, with a party of friends, for Windsor, and that the time of his return was altogether uncertain.

I could have wished, for my own satisfaction, that the friendly Baronet had succeeded in obtaining a personal interview with the gentleman, though, on reconsidering the whole circumstance, I could not fail to join with him in the conviction, that my Uncle had indeed laboured under a delusion, and was now gone upon a wild-goose chase ; a fact of which, till this moment, I could not help entertaining a considerable degree of doubt. I gave Allanby many thanks for the trouble he had so kindly taken, and he had just risen for the purpose of leaving me, after an ineffectual attempt to

prevail on me to dine with him, when the long-expected reply to my appeal was put into my hands by the well-remembered lackey in the “green and gold.”

I retreated to a window to peruse it, and read as follows:—

“SIR,

“The letter you have just thought proper to transmit, convinces me of what I could scarcely have conceived possible,—that your worthlessness and folly are even exceeded by your audacity.

“That you came hither at ‘my express and unsolicited invitation’ is true;—that invitation, Sir, was dictated by the affection I ever bore your gallant father,—a father whose name you should blush to pronounce,—and by the hope that in the representative of his person I should find the inheritor of his virtues. Had that ‘Colonel Stafford,’ whose name you dare to profane, lived to witness this disgraceful conduct of his degenerate son, it would have broken his heart.—I can no longer lament his decease.

“The whole of your dishonourable career is now fully known to me; to much of it, especially to your infamous tampering with the honesty of a servant, I had previously been an indignant, though unsuspected witness. Your insinuation as to the agency of slander and calumny is as despicable as you know it to be false, and your behaviour will admit neither vindication nor apology.

“Miss Stafford holds you in the contempt you merit; the bauble which your artifices forced upon her has been transmitted to your mother, together with the lamentable detail of her son’s profligacy.

“Desist, young man, from intruding any farther upon the members of a family who disown and despise you, or you may be taught—that not even the fond recollection of departed worth, nor the name which you bear and disgrace, will longer prove your protection from the chastisement you deserve, or operate as a motive to forbearance on

“MANNINGHAM.”

This gentle, and conciliating epistle was duly endorsed to "Charles Stafford, Esq. Tavistock Hotel."

Its contents rekindled at once the smothered embers of my anger, and furnished fresh materials for my surprise.

Galling and contemptuous as were the terms in which it was couched, the very natural indignation I experienced on its perusal, was quickly merged in wonder.—Had then my name and person been all the while so well known to her whose address I had made so many efforts to discover?—Had all my actions been so closely watched and observed, at the very time when my whole soul was occupied in watching and observing those of others, and that too without success?—Had even that, as I believed, most recondite circumstance, my having "tipped" Sally Jennens with five guineas for her information, been open to the inspection of some latent looker-on?—And then the vinaigrette—the so much despised "bauble"—which I had purchased as a means of gaining access to my then unknown charmer, had, as it appeared,

reached its destination, (a fact which I had more than doubted,) and had been since returned with ignominy “to my mother!”—I was lost in amazement.

But admitting all this—admitting that Lord Manningham himself had, which I could hardly have supposed possible, witnessed the whole of my manœuvres to obtain access to his daughter,—was there anything so very reprehensible in my conduct as to justify the reproach and vituperation contained in his letter, and the ignominious epithets therein applied to it?—If, in the eagerness of my desire to get possession of the address of a young lady I *had* bestowed a trifling *douceur* upon a servant girl, was there anything in the transaction to warrant the charge of “profligacy,” or of “tampering with a servant’s honesty?”—What if I had intruded on that young lady a paltry trinket?—Of impertinence she might perhaps with justice have accused me, but surely not of “worthlessness,” or “disgraceful conduct.”

Surely nothing but the very spirit of puritanism itself could affix epithets so severe to actions



so trifling, and, as I thought, so venial, in their nature.—But so it was;—and as pride alone would have prevented my making any further attempt at conciliating Lord Manningham, even had I seen the remotest chance of succeeding,—which I did not,—I resolved to avoid the unpleasant situation of being the herald of my own disgrace to Sir Oliver, and of being forced to reply to all the various queries with which I knew he would assail me, by leaving London immediately, and before his return.

Besides, I reflected that, should I act otherwise, and await his arrival, it was by no means improbable that, on hearing my story, he would, in his anxiety to have matters simplified, insist on my accompanying him once more to Grosvenor Square,—a measure against which every feeling of my soul revolted,—and subjecting myself, perhaps, to a repetition of the mortifying indignities I had already sustained ; or that, in the event of my refusal, Sir Oliver himself, of whose pertinacity of opinion I had had ample experience, might take it into his head to be offended with me, and thus I might seriously quarrel

with both my uncles, without any intention of affronting either.

This determination, therefore, I failed not to put in practice as quickly as possible, and, leaving a couple of notes to be delivered after my departure, once more set out on my return to Underdown Hall.

The first of these billets was addressed to Sir Oliver, to be given to him on his arrival, and ran thus :—

“ MY DEAR UNCLE,

“ Circumstances of an awkward nature, which I feel myself unable at present either to control or explain, have rendered it impossible for me to put in execution the intention with which I came to London.

“ A strong prejudice, whence originating I know not, appears to exist against me in the mind of Lord Manningham. Time may, perhaps, obliterate a feeling which seems to me as unaccountable as I know it to be unjust ; in the meanwhile, it may be better, perhaps, for all parties, that we should come as little into con-

tact as possible. I have therefore retired to the Hall, and, in the hope of soon witnessing your own return to the house which your indulgence has taught me to consider our mutual home, remain your affectionate Nephew,

“ C. STAFFORD.

“ P. S. I have been able to ascertain, almost to demonstration, that my Cousin Nicholas had no hand whatever in the unpleasant business at the theatre, but that your antagonist was indeed the very gentleman whom he represented himself to be.”

The other was directed to Lord Manningham.

“ MY LORD,

“ The son of that Colonel Stafford, ‘ whose decease you no longer regret,’ is only withheld by the respect due to his father’s memory, and the recollection of the near connexion between that revered parent and Viscount Manningham, from fully expressing to the latter his sentiments on the unfounded aspersions cast by him upon a character as unspotted as his own.

“ Be assured, my Lord, that the ‘ members of your family’ *will* be ‘ no more intruded on ’ by one who now values your Lordship’s favour as little as he dreads the resentment with which you think proper to menace him.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Your Lordship’s servant,

“ CHARLES STAFFORD.”

“ To Viscount Manningham,  
&c. &c. &c.”

## CHAPTER XI.

Inter Sylvas Academi quærere verum.—HOR.

Through Academic groves

The puzzled Hero roves

To seek if facts be facts,—or all a mere hum!

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A HASTY MAN.—A SICK MAN.—AN ANGRY MAN.—AN  
OBSEQUIOUS MAN.—A LEARNED MAN.—AND A PUZZLED  
MAN.

DURING part of this period, and while I was the alternate prey of fear, hope, disappointment, and indignation, Sir Oliver had proceeded, as fast as four stout roadsters could carry him, towards Oxford, anathematizing my Cousin Nicholas, at least ten times between every milestone and its successor, with bitter vows of taking the most complete and summary vengeance, in case he should find that his son had

deceived him, and in his person had actually menaced the nasal organs of a Bullwinkle with manual compression.

On his arrival at the Angel, he scarcely waited to discharge the post-boys, ere, hurrying, with the utmost expedition of which he was capable, to the venerable edifice of which his son was,—or ought to be,—an inmate, he inquired for the rooms of Mr. Nicholas Bullwinkle. They were immediately pointed out to him by an obsequious porter, and my Uncle proceeded, through a rank of marvelling freshmen, who were congregated in the quadrangle, to the staircase which led to his apartments. Sir Oliver tarried not to give even the usual petitionary knock at the inner door, but, turning the handle without scruple or delay, abruptly entered the room.

At a table loaded with folios of a most imposing bulk, and properly furnished with all the necessary adjuncts of pen, ink, and paper, clad in a long duffle wrapping-gown, with a pair of green spectacles upon his nose, and a rummer of water by his side,—sat my Cousin Nicholas.

His cheeks were pale, not to say haggard ;— his form attenuated, and his whole appearance that of a man suffering under the oppression of serious indisposition. The sudden entrance of Sir Oliver caused him to start, and communicated a visible degree of tremor to his whole frame ; the pen actually trembled in his hand as he exclaimed, on hearing the noise, “ Who’s there ?—Sanderson, is that you ?—you know I am reading, and can’t see any body.”

“ Nick !” quoth my Uncle Oliver, “ is it you, Nick ?—Speak to me, you rascal, and tell me, is that you ?”

“ My dear father !—impossible !—can I believe my eyes ?—here, Jem !—porter !—My dear sir, to what am I to attribute this very unexpected pleasure ?—Nothing the matter at the Hall, I hope ?—here, Jem, I say, come up directly and be —— to you !”

The concluding sentence of this address was uttered out of the window to a “ scout ” in the quadrangle,—(bells were rare in Brazenose)—and was delivered in a tone of the utmost impatience ;—then placing a chair, the invalid once

more felicitated himself on the arrival of his father, and extended his hand towards him, as if in expectation of a friendly shake.

“No, Sir,” cried the Baronet, most unceremoniously rejecting his proffered salute. “Sit down, Sir,—sit down, and answer me a few questions, before I make up my mind whether I am ever to acknowledge you as my son again or not.”

“My dear Sir, what can be the meaning of this most alarming preface?—However, I am much too happy to see you, on any terms, to quarrel with the cause which affords me the pleasure of your company.”

“I do not believe one word of it,” quoth my Uncle, — “you would as lieve see the devil, Sir; — but here I am, and here I mean to remain, till you have told me how you dared offer me such an insult as you did last night; —how you had the assurance” — my Uncle’s voice rose an octave — “to threaten to pull my nose!”

If anger was the predominant expression of Sir Oliver’s countenance, astonishment seemed



no less forcibly portrayed in that of my Cousin. —“Pull your nose, my dear father! — last night! — you surprise me; what can be the meaning of all this? — Has any one dared to insult you? — If so, be assured I shall resent it as a son ought to do, and I cannot tell you how highly gratified I feel that you should have taken the trouble of coming thus far, to give me an opportunity of chastising the insolence of ——”

“Be quiet, puppy, and answer me — nobody’s insolence is to be chastised but your own. — Tell me, Sir, how dared you deny all knowledge of me, to my face, at Drury Lane, no longer ago than last night?”

“Drury La — ? — my dear Sir,” cried the now alarmed Nicholas, “I have not been out of my room this fortnight; surely, Sir, the fatigue of your journey, — or something, — has decomposed you — let me offer you some refreshment. — Why, Jem,” continued my Cousin, turning once more abruptly to the window, and carefully wrapping a silk handkerchief, that lay on the sofa near him, round his throat, as he

opened it,—“ Jem, do you mean to come up to-day or not ? ”

“ Nay, Sir,” cried Sir Oliver, “ do not give Mr. Jem, whoever the gentleman may be, the trouble of walking up stairs, nor expose your own very delicate health to the influence of the cold air. I am neither drunk nor mad ; so answer me in three words, and without any prevarication, — were you, or were you not, in London yesterday evening ? ”

“ Not I, upon my word, Sir Oliver ; — and why you should imagine such a thing, I cannot, for the life of me, conceive. Had I even entertained any intention of the kind, the indisposition under which I have been labouring for this fortnight past would alone have been sufficient to prevent my carrying it into effect, — to say nothing of my being engaged very busily in reading for my ‘ *Little Go* ’ — my dear father, I am quite a skeleton ; only look at me ! — do feel my ribs ! ”

“ Curse your ribs ! ” cried the Baronet, “ I ’ll break every one of them ; I ’ll — ”

Here the scout entered the room.

“Jem,” said my Cousin Nicholas, “my father is just arrived in Oxford; go to the kitchen and buttery, and make them send up something immediately — and borrow me a bottle of wine, Jem,—it is so long since I drank any, that I am afraid my own cellar will not afford one — and, Jem,—come back and help me to put these books out of the way.”

Jem stared, made a short quick bow, and was retiring, when his retreat was cut off by Sir Oliver—

“Stop one moment, Mister Jem,—if that is your name,—I beg of you; and please to inform me, Mister Jem, at what hour did this young gentleman return from London?”

The man looked all astonishment—he gazed alternately at my Uncle and his son, and made no answer.

“Jem,” said my Cousin, “some officious blockhead or other has put it into my father’s head that I was in town no longer ago than yesterday;—you, I think, can satisfy him that

I have not even left my room this fortnight till this very day, when I went, for the first time since my illness, to morning chapel."

"Very true, Sir," returned Jem; "I called you — by your orders — at six o'clock."

"Indeed!" returned Sir Oliver; "I must, however, have better evidence than even that of the very respectable Mr. Jem, before I believe one syllable of the matter; so, Mr. Nicholas Bullwinkle, if you please, we will adjourn to the apartments of your tutor, and hear his opinion of the business — unless, indeed, the very delicate state of your health should render it dangerous for you to accompany me."

"By all means, Sir;—I will attend you with the greatest pleasure; indeed, I do not know but that the air may be of service to me. Jem, —my great-coat!"

The obsequious James produced the required surtout, which my Cousin, having first taken off and leisurely wiped his spectacles, proceeded to indue, with a degree of deliberation that formed a fine contrast with the impatience manifested in every twist and turn of Sir Oli-

ver's features. The bandana received a more careful and studied adjustment round the throat, and the usual paraphernalia of academic costume being duly arranged over all, Nicholas seemed prepared to accompany his father, when, before they reached the door of the apartment, he stopped suddenly, and exclaimed, "I beg your pardon, Sir Oliver, may I detain you one moment? — The tincture, Jem; — surely it is time that I took my tincture?"

The obedient scout repaired to a closet on the other side of the room, from which he produced a half-pint bottle and a glass, into the latter of which he carefully poured two table-spoonfuls of a dark-coloured fluid, bearing a most suspicious resemblance to cherry-brandy. This he extended to my Cousin Nicholas, who received and swallowed it, not without a due contortion of visage; — then, without any further attempt at delay, he followed the impatient Baronet down the staircase, but *haud passibus æquis*, and supporting himself by the banister.

The pair proceeded in solemn silence; the

younger gentleman having been suddenly cut short by the elder in the very commencement of an embryo dissertation on the medicinal qualities of "Huxham's Tincture of Bark."

In this way, notwithstanding the procrastination occasioned by the tardiness of my Cousin, whose pace very little exceeded that which is termed by military men "marking time," the door of the Reverend Josiah Pozzlethwayte's apartment was at length attained, and they were received by that learned tutor with all the dignity of a fellow of a college, beautifully tempered by the urbanity of a gentleman, despite a slight shade of vexation, which a keen observer might have detected stealing over his countenance at the interruption his visitors occasioned to the progress of a very erudite and entertaining little treatise on the various gerunds in *Di*, *Do*, and *Dum*, which he was on the point of completing, and offering to the world in three quarto volumes.

Sir Oliver, who was by no means a man of many words, introduced himself and his errand with truly Spartan brevity, while his polite

auditor listened with attention, and replied to his inquiries in a manner which savoured more of the elegance of Attic, than the force and conciseness of Lacedemonian, oratory, while the classic mind of my Cousin Nicholas, who remained for some time a silent, though not uninterested observer, at once suggested to him “the image of a supposed Pericles listening to one of an imaginary Ephori.”

This he afterwards told my Uncle, who, not knowing anything of either of the gentlemen named, nor quite approving the expression of countenance with which the remark was uttered, was very near breaking his head in return for his elegant allusion.

The evidence, if such it may be termed, of the learned tutor was, however, equally in my Cousin's favour with that of Jem East, the scout, and seemed altogether irreconcilable with Sir Oliver's hypothesis.

The Reverend Mr. Pozzlethwayte was a great logician; he could demonstrate, without the slightest difficulty, that although “John was a man, and Peter was a man,” yet, from

a want of the necessary "distribution of the Middle Term," it was by no means a legitimate consequence that "John was Peter;"—he gave Sir Oliver most convincing reasons why it was impossible that his son should be, at one and the same time, present at two different places fifty-six miles asunder;—he proved, first, that it was "Term Time at Oxford"—secondly, that no Undergraduate could be absent without leave when it was "Term Time at Oxford"—then, that my Cousin Nicholas was an Undergraduate—after that, that my Cousin Nicholas had no leave of absence,—and then triumphantly drew his inference, that of course my Cousin Nicholas could not be absent during "Term Time at Oxford."

He changed his battery, and demonstrated that "a man who was too ill to move could never have gone from Oxford to London—but my Cousin was too ill to move—*therefore* my Cousin could not have gone from Oxford to London."

He argued from cause to effect, and then



reasoned back again from effect to cause;—now he pressed his auditor with all the syllogistic energies of “*Major*,” “*Minor*,” and “*Consequence* ;”—then he crushed him beneath the overwhelming weight of a “*Sorites* ;”—and finally compelled him, by a judicious use of Socratic interrogation, to prove himself an unredeemed blockhead.

Sir Oliver—who, in the discharge of what he called his duties as a magistrate for the county, had not unfrequently listened with admiration and conviction “at Sessions” to the luminous statements of the counsel on one side, till the equally brilliant effusions of the counsel on the other side provokingly brought the matter once more into doubt,—now, when the full tide of argument took a decided and uncontradicted turn, gave way to a torrent which he found it beyond his power to stem;—slowly and most reluctantly did he yield a grumbling assent to propositions which he was unable to refute, though almost equally unwilling to admit.

After sifting the matter as closely as he

could, the result of all his inquiries was, that Mr. Bullwinkle had been "*æger*" for more than a fortnight, and his sickly appearance certainly tended much to corroborate this representation. It was also ascertained by reference to the Bible-clerk that he had actually been at chapel that morning at half-past six; "Jem," moreover, testified that he had himself summoned him from his bed half-an-hour before, while the rules of academic discipline precluded the opening of the college gates till after morning-prayers.—My Cousin would have got his acquittal in any court in Christendom, and Sir Oliver was obliged to succumb, which he at length did, but with a very bad grace, and as if only half-convinced.

It is recorded of a right worshipful citizen, who thrice filled the civic chair of the greatest corporation in the world, and was honoured by his fellow-citizens, at his decease, with a monument erected to his memory, at the public expense, and which still forms a principal ornament of that very Guildhall which had so often been the scene of his triumphs,—it is on re-

cord, I say, that he once overwhelmed a Prime Minister, by an energetic declaration, that "*them there facts is stubborn things!*"—Sir Oliver Bullwinkle could no more invalidate the force of Alderman Beckford's axiom than could the Premier.

## CHAPTER XII.

——— Oh ! what damned minutes counts he o'er  
Who dotes yet doubts,—suspects yet strongly loves.

OTHELLO.

Noscitur a Naso !

He said he'd pull my Nose !—I heard him say so.

———  
CARDS, THE DEVIL'S BOOKS.—A RELAPSE.—WHAT'S IN A  
NAME ?

THE worthy Baronet and his hopeful heir retraced their steps towards the apartments of the latter, Sir Oliver hardly knowing whether he was pleased or sorry at the conviction which had been, in a manner, forced upon him.

That the character of his son had come out of the fiery ordeal, to which it had been subjected, pure and immaculate as a new laid egg,

was, to be sure, a subject of much self-congratulation; but then the unwelcome truth would force itself on his recollection, that, in proportion as the conduct of Nicholas appeared blameless, his own must seem absurd; nor could he help feeling that, all things considered, he was cutting a tolerably ridiculous figure. In no very enviable state of mind he ascended the stairs of number 6, with much more of deliberation than had marked his progress down them an hour before, while the pace of Nicholas was accelerated in a corresponding ratio, so that they now contrived to keep tolerably well together.

On re-entering the room a small card of invitation lay on the table, giving evident proof that, during their absence, the apartment had been invaded by a visitor. The small piece of pasteboard alluded to bore, moreover, an inscription as interesting to Sir Oliver as any in the Theban catacombs, or on the sarcophagus of Cheops himself, could be to a modern traveller, possessing, besides, the incalculable advantage of being much more easily deciphered.—The words it displayed were,

“ Wine with Hanbury,

“ O. C.

“ Friday 11th.”

And it was indorsed,

“ N. Bullwinkle, Esq.”

Had a basilisk met the eyes of my Uncle, he could not have exhibited a more theatric and imposing start!—The still slumbering embers of suspicion “ flared up,” at once, into as bright a blaze as the real element, from which this popular metaphor is taken, emits when some unlucky imp of mischief hurls, with toe unerring aim, a handful of pounded resin into the fire, for the purpose of astounding a dozing grandmother, or electrifying a maiden aunt.—Every combustible particle in Sir Oliver’s whole frame ignited on the instant.

“ Hanbury !” exclaimed he, with the look, air, and voice of a male Tisiphone.

“ A friend of mine, Sir Oliver,” said Nicholas with the most perfect composure, not perceiving,— or not choosing to perceive,—the effect which this name of bad omen had upon his

father.—“ A college friend of mine, and a very good fellow he is, only rather too much of a bookworm ;—he is known here by the *sobriquet* of ‘ Sobersides ;’—I should like to join his party amazingly, if my health would permit me, for it is not often he ventures upon one ; but the ‘ *mens sana in corpore sano,*’ you know, Sir,—(Sir Oliver did *not* know,)—must be preferred to everything else ; and as it is in vain to expect intellectual without corporeal health, I must, however reluctantly, give up the idea, for I feel my nervous system is too much deranged to admit of my joining at present in any kind of gaiety, else—I must confess—I should like just to pop in my nose ——”

“ At a scoundrel’s who swore he would pull your father’s !” roared the indignant Baronet, in the tones of a Stentor.—Nicholas stood aghast.—For the first time there appeared in the expression of his countenance a sort of indefinite alarm, which might perhaps have been interpreted into an apprehension that the intellects of his father were affected.—It was some time before he found breath to utter—

“ My dear Sir, do I understand you right?— I thought it had been myself who had,—most unjustly certainly,—fallen under your suspicion as the author of the outrageous insult offered to you ; and now, when I have, I trust, satisfied you of the impossibility of the thing, you would seem to accuse my friend, a man whom I am morally certain you have never seen in your life.—What can I think, Sir Oliver?”

“ I don’t care a farthing what you think, Sir!—What the d—l are your thoughts to me? —I tell you again I am now fully convinced that you and your rascally friend, between you, are at the bottom of all this ; but lead me to the jackanapes immediately ! Let me see him, I say, and if I find I *have* been imposed upon after all—Come along directly, Nick ; for if you refuse to go ——”

“ Refuse?—Oh ! not I, indeed, Sir—all over the University, if you please ;—and we’ll ask every third man we meet whether he ever threatened to pull your nose.—I have no objection, Sir, I assure you ——”

Sir Oliver looked as if he had a great mind



to knock my Cousin Nicholas down ; but seeing him so very composedly occupied in resuming the gown which he had just divested himself of, and not perhaps finding any words, at the moment, adequate to the full expression of his confused feelings, he contented himself with biting his nether lip, and remained silent.

“ Now, I am ready whenever you please, Sir Oliver ;—where, may I ask, would you choose to commence your inquiries ? ”

“ No sneering, puppy, but shew me instantly to the fellow who left this card ! ”

“ With all my heart, Sir.—Poor Sobersides ! how he will stare !—But may I beg you to be calm, Sir Oliver, as I assure you, you will find yourself a second time mistaken. ”

Thus saying, Nicholas quietly began to descend the staircase, and led the way to the college-gate.

Totally unobservant of the venerable buildings that now surrounded him on all sides, and querulously cutting short his son’s attempts to recommend them to his notice, the angry Baronet kept close to his side, eyeing him occasionally

with glances which seemed to indicate a suspicion that he would endeavour to run away, and at the same time grasping his arm with the force and tenacity of a smith's vice, as if fully determined to prevent his escape.

But Nicholas entertained no such intention; he kept steadily on, till, on passing the portal surmounted by the huge projection of gilt wood, which has somehow or other been, facetiously enough, designated as the Brazen Nose, — an appellation as little warranted by its anti-metallie appearance, as by its want of resemblance to the feature it is said to represent — he again, in spite of the ungracious repulses which all his attempts at “lionizing” had hitherto met with, could not help directing his father's attention to the mystic emblem above him; but in his present mood, the very word “Nose” sounded harshly in the ears of Sir Oliver, and he again bade his son “cease his chattering,” in no very dulcet tones.

On reaching the place of their destination, Mr. Hanbury's “oak” was open. A rap with the knuckles at his door was immediately an-

swered by a cry of "Come in!" and Nicholas, with his father close at his heels, entered the room.

"Hanbury, my good fellow, how are you?" said the former, advancing with extended hand towards a young gentleman dressed in a morning gown, who rose from a sofa to receive him.

"I am sorry, Hanbury, I was not in the way this morning when you called, but I come to bring you my answer in person. In the mean time, allow me to introduce to you my father—Hanbury—Sir Oliver Bullwinkle."

During this exordium, Sir Oliver had been narrowly scrutinizing the person of his new acquaintance, but found himself once more baffled in his expectations, as neither in feature, voice, nor figure, did the gentleman before him bear the slightest resemblance to the object of his resentment — the likeness was in the name alone.

Still the coincidence was most remarkable, that among the more particular friends, and in the immediate society of his son, he should meet with a person of so ominous a designa-

tion, that, if the name of the one had but been united with the person of the other, no reasonable doubt could any longer have remained upon his mind.—He felt himself completely mystified ;—he knew not what to believe or to reject, and therefore only bowed and stammered in reply to the easy and polite reception given to him by young Hanbury as the father of his friend.

“ Bullwinkle,” said their host to my Cousin, after they had taken chairs, “ I am sincerely glad to see you out again ; you have had a sharp time of it ; and, not to flatter you, your illness has pulled you down not a little. I called to-day, as I had heard from Jones this morning that you had been at chapel, in the hope of prevailing on you to meet a few friends here on Friday : we shall be a very quiet party.”

“ I never knew one otherwise at your rooms, Hanbury ; and I believe, in spite of prudence, I should have joined you, but my father, as you see, is just arrived, and will not, I hope, leave Oxford for some days.—My time must of course be entirely at his disposal.”

“I trust I need not say,” returned Hanbury, “how much I should be gratified by Sir Oliver’s company also on that occasion, or that I shall feel great pleasure if any services of mine can be acceptable to him. You are but weak as yet, Bullwinkle, and, I am sure, altogether unequal to the task of making the tour of the University.—I shall be most happy if your father will accept me as your substitute.”

Sir Oliver knew not what to make of all this. Mr. Hanbury’s manners and address were polished and prepossessing, and his attentions to himself flattering. Had he borne any other name in the world, his politeness would have been met with cordiality. As it was, a vague idea that he was duped still most pertinaciously occupied the Baronet’s mind, and repelled the growing inclination he felt to believe he had been indeed mistaken. By degrees, however, his suspicions gave way, especially when, in reply to one of the Baronet’s questions, “Whether he had any relative in the Guards?” Hanbury unhesitatingly informed him that he had an elder brother in the Coldstream, “a man,

by the way, Sir Oliver, whom I could much wish to introduce to you, as I should like to see whether you would be able to discover in him that personal resemblance to my friend, your son, here, which many of our acquaintance insist is so very strong a one."

"Indeed, Sir!" asked Sir Oliver; "is the likeness so remarkable?"

"Astonishing, many of them affect to say; but, for my own part, I cannot say I see it in so strong a light as some do, who go the length of asserting that the pair might be taken for twins.—Nevertheless, I admit that they are a good deal alike. Indeed, I am not sure but that this resemblance to poor Tom,—(a worthy fellow at bottom, Sir Oliver, though I fear the dissipated scenes his profession exposes him to have rendered him not so steady as he used to be,)—has tended not a little to cement the friendship which exists between your son and myself.—Poor Tom! he certainly often puts me in mind of him!"

"Very often, indeed, I should think," re-

turned Sir Oliver. "Confound me if I should know the difference between them."

"Indeed, Sir Oliver.—You have seen my brother, then?"

"Why, I rather think I have—that is—Pray, sir, where may Captain Hanbury be at this moment?"

"Upon my word I can hardly say.—In London, it is most likely—at least I received a letter from him, (here it is,) about three days ago, dated from the St. James's Coffee-house; but he is so very locomotive, that, for anything I know to the contrary, he may be in the Hebrides by this time."

"I fancy, sir," replied the Baronet, "he is scarcely so far north. By what you tell me, I am induced to suppose that I must have been, for a very few minutes, in his company last night;—but come, sir," continued he, "if you are not otherwise engaged, and will favour my son and me with your company to a quiet dinner at my inn, you shall hear the whole history of the occasion of my journey to Oxford, in which

to speak the truth, your brother cuts no inconsiderable figure.”

“ You raise my curiosity greatly, Sir Oliver, and I shall feel much pleasure in accepting your invitation.”

During the whole of this dialogue, my Cousin Nicholas, who took no share in it, was busily employed in turning over the leaves of a parcel of books which lay on a side-table, apparently absorbed in his pursuit, and paying very little or no attention to the subject of the duetto in performance between his father and his friend; but now, seeing the former preparing to depart, he closed the volume which he had been examining, and inquired with much gravity “ Where Sir Oliver would choose to go next?”

“ Back again to London, to be sure,” was the reply; “ but come, before I start, let us see what we can have for dinner, for my journey has made me as hungry as a hunter.”

Nature herself abhors not a *vacuum* more than did Sir Oliver. The fumes of anger, which had hitherto expanded his chest, and produced an artificial and fallacious plenitude, had now, in a great



degree, evaporated, and his stomach might by this time be not unaptly compared to a balloon when an unlucky rent has suffered the major part of its gas to escape. He hurried his two companions to the inn, and ordered an excellent dinner, to which he did ample justice ; nor was either of his guests at all behind hand in following his example. Nicholas, in particular, made a very hearty meal for an invalid ; and the brisk circulation of a few flasks of very tolerable champagne seemed to produce an effect upon him to the full as salutary as his favourite “ Huxham’s Tincture of Bark.”

It was late before the party separated ; nor did they break up for the night till Sir Oliver, who had by this time perfectly recovered his good-humour, voluntarily promised to rescind his determination of returning immediately, and to remain a day or two, and recreate his eyes with a sight of the “ Lions ” of the University.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Quodcunque ostendis mihi SICK incredulus odi.

HOR.

——— If ancestry can be in aught believed,  
 Descending spirits have conversed with man,  
 And told the secrets of the world unknown.

HONE.

—————  
 A RIDE.—A WALK.—A SONG.—A CONVERSATION.—A DRY  
 ARGUMENT.—A WET CONCLUSION.

THE \* \* \* \* mail-coach, in which I had secured myself a passage, contained also within its recesses a fat quaker, a pilot, an ailing child, and a woman afflicted with the toothach.

There are times when the happy temperament of our minds, arising from the eager anticipation of some expected enjoyment, or the full gratification of some darling desire, attunes

our whole soul to harmony, and renders us careless and unobservant of those minor annoyances which, in a less joyous mood, would prove no inconsiderable drawback on our felicity; there are also times, when, from sheer intensity of mental suffering, our faculties are so entirely absorbed as to remain unaffected by their presence, and even unconscious of their existence.

Neither of these was at present my lot; the irritable state of my feelings only rendered me the more alive to the miseries of my situation. The worthy member of the Society of Friends, whose ample breadth occupied somewhat more than three-fourths of the seat, was my neighbour, and pinned me close up in one corner of the vehicle, without the possibility of my effecting a change of position even to avoid the direct stream of exhalation from the sailor, who faced me redolent of rum. The latter, having succeeded, that morning, in bringing a valuable cargo into the port of London, was now returning, by a less dangerous element, to the seaport to which he belonged, in order to wait for an-

other job of the same kind, and, previously to occupying his present berth, had stowed in rather more than his usual proportion of grog. The female, who sat by his side, was, as we soon learned from herself, the wife of an eminent cheesemonger in the Borough, going into the country on a visit to her relations; the coachman, doubtless for weighty reasons, had allowed her, although contrary to the strict letter of his regulations, to carry her son on her lap,—“as he was such a very little one,”—and the tortures I had already begun to experience were soon added to in a tenfold degree by her insisting on both the windows being closed to prevent the intrusion of the night-air, which, as she averred, much increased her own complaint, and would besides give her “little darling” cold.

Thus closely wedged, and in an atmosphere to be envied only by the unfortunate Englishmen once confined in the Black-hole at Calcutta, did we “roll along the turnpike road.” The quaker snored, the child cried, its mother groaned, while my friend opposite, apparently

insensible to all the disagreeables which so much annoyed myself, hummed

“ Here a sheer hulk lies poor Tom Bowling,”

and tendered me his tobacco-box. On my declining to avail myself of his kind offer, in a tone which I laboured to render civil, he ceased his tune, and conveying a respectable portion of “ shag ” to his own mouth, prepared, with the utmost composure, to accompany my sleeping partner on the right in a most sonorous duet upon the same instrument. — Oh ! how I hated the whole party !

For nearly an hour had I sat thus, enduring the utmost degree of compression which the human frame is capable of bearing, muttering to myself, at every roll of the coach, “ curses not loud but deep,” and filling a situation not unlike that of a refractory culprit, whose obstinacy, in refusing to plead, has exposed him to the *peine forte et dure*, a method by which “ the statute, in that case made and provided,” till lately directed that an answer should be squeezed out of the most refractory.

My mind was worked up to the highest pitch of irritation, when fortunately the coach stopped, and I perceived, at the door of a solitary public-house by the road-side, a relay with every preparation for changing horses. Eagerly did I avail myself of the opportunity afforded to exchange the confinement I had endured for a state of liberty, if only for a few moments ;— to let down the window, open the door, and spring from the vehicle to the ground, was the work of an instant. Heedless of the discomposure my abrupt secession had occasioned within, I proceeded to pace backwards and forwards by the side of the carriage, every limb revelling in its emancipation.

The night was a lovely one —

“ The silver moon unclouded held her way  
Through skies where I could count each little star.”

The air was unusually warm for the time of year, and a gentle breeze gave a tremulous motion to the chequered light of the moonshine falling through the boughs, while its balmy breathings conveyed to the sense all the rich

and fragrant perfume of an English Spring. The silence was broken alone by the plaintive strains of a soft and mellow voice at a little distance, chaunting in a subdued and melancholy tone, which fell grateful on the ear, and harmonized delightfully with the character of the scene. — What a contrast to the exhalations of toddy and tobacco, and the serenade from which I had with so much difficulty escaped !

The peaceful calm which seemed to envelope all nature, animate and inanimate, operated upon my spirits as a holy charm. My roused and angry passions were fast subsiding into a state of placidity, when the spell was rudely broken, and the sacred stillness of the night invaded by the hoarse voices of the guard and ostler, now high in oath respecting some mischance which had occurred to the *matériel* of the coach.

“ My eyes ! here ’s a rig ! — I say, Bill, blow me if this here bar beesn’t just asunder ; — show us a light ! ”

“ Ey, ey, Jem, what say ? — let me see ; where is it ? ”

“ *You* see? — you be — ; vot ’s the use of your seeing, spooney? show us a light, I tell ’ee ! ”

Bill obeyed grumbling, and entered the house to procure a candle, with which he soon returned, accompanied by the coachman, who had been discussing a glass of “ *summut short* ” within doors, and now added himself to the conclave.

“ *Broke*, do ye say?” cried the latter, advancing the lantern towards the suspected fracture ; “ so it is, by gum — devilish near asunder too. This now was that e—d old mare coming down the hill ; always a-kicking, a wicious old beast — I vonder Master keeps sich warmint ! ”

“ Come, Tom,” returned the guard — “ it ’s no use to stand growling here ; — Bill, get us a bit o’ rope, will ’ee? We must splice her up as well as we can till we gets to B \* \* \* ” (the name of the next stage).

At this moment a human head was protruded from each window of the vehicle. The parley without had reached the ears of the personages within, already disturbed by my elopement,



and, although they could not exactly gather the purport of the matter in debate, the manner in which the colloquy was carried on served to induce a suspicion that their own interests were somehow or other implicated in the result of the conference.

“What cheer, messmates?” asked the pilot, “she won’t capsize, will she?” while the sonorous tones of the Quaker were heard from the opposite opening. Surprised into a temporary deviation from his usual mode of delivery, yet still preserving that formality of expression, which not even apprehended danger could subdue, he exclaimed, with unwonted rapidity, “Friend, aileth the leathern conveniency anything?” while the fair dispenser of currants and molasses, losing, or forgetting, her toothach in her alarm, half cried, half screamed, as the tar vacated his berth to give his assistance, “Lauk-a-daisey me! vy vot ’s the matter vith the shay, I vonders?”

Finding that the arrangements necessary for the continuing our journey in safety were likely to take up some little time, and aware of the

general correctness of an homely adage, "that too many cooks are apt to spoil the broth," I did not presume to encumber with my inefficient aid those whose experience in the mysteries of splicing, dove-tailing, and all the endless varieties of ligature, so much exceeded my own,—an aid too which, if tendered, would, in all probability, have been rejected with contempt. Still less did I feel inclined to exhibit a supererogatory gallantry in soothing the fears of the apprehensive matron, to whose grinders alarm had already restored the full power of mastication. Aware, as I am, how much my character must suffer in the estimation of my female readers from the confession, I must still honestly avow that I could not find it in my heart to utter one consoling word, or even to assist in quieting the unsavoury "Jacky," who, frightened because he saw his mother frightened, now added his yells to the harmonic combination. Indeed, my only care was to remove myself as far as possible from the sphere of their influence; so, telling the coachman that I would walk forward till he should overtake

me, I proceeded leisurely on, not a little pleased at the opportunity thus afforded me of enjoying a small portion of so fine an evening, and feeling, I fear, a malignant pleasure at the retributive sufferings now inflicted on some of those who had so long kept me in purgatory.

I had made but little progress in my walk, and was scarcely clear of Johnny's shrill vociferations, when the same musical and plaintive notes which had attracted my attention previously to the discovery of the accident, again caught my ear.

The sounds were evidently at no great distance from me, yet seemed to recede as I approached, till, at length, they appeared to become stationary, since I manifestly gained upon them, and could even distinguish a few of the words which my invisible entertainer was singing to a wild but melancholy air. A turn of the road brought me suddenly near the person who was thus, as it seemed, venting his sorrows and complainings to the ear of night, and calling in the aid of harmony to soothe the grief it cannot entirely tranquillize.

It was the tall figure of a man that now dimly met my view ; he was enveloped in a large cloak, similar to those then used by the military on service, and since in so much request among our students in law and linen-drapery. Its ample folds concealed, in a great measure, the proportions of a form of which only a confused outline could be traced beneath the shadow of a couple of tall trees that skirted the road. I could, however, distinguish that the person, whoever he might be, was of a commanding height, in spite of the unfavourableness of the attitude in which he stood, as he remained, with his back turned towards me, leaning over a gate, and, as I conjectured from the position of his head, gazing earnestly on the brilliant luminary which shone in mild radiance above him.

As I turned the corner of the hedge which had hitherto concealed him from my sight, his song ceased. I paused for a moment as I beheld him, but was again advancing, when the recurrence of the strain checked my footsteps. Apparently absorbed in his own contemplations,

he had not perceived my approach, and I was now sufficiently near to distinguish, with tolerable precision, the following couplets, which he sang to the same wild melody that had at first attracted my attention, still seeming to address himself to the shining planet on which his eyes were fixed.

## SONG OF THE NIGHT WANDERER.

- “ There is a low and a lonely vale,  
Where the silver moon shines clearly,  
And thither I flew to tell my tale  
To one whom I loved full dearly ;  
In jocund glee I bounded along,  
And gaily I laugh'd, and troll'd my song ;  
Oh the Moon ! the lovely Moon !  
Dearer to me the light o' the Moon  
Than the gaudy blaze of the flaunting Noon !
- “ But the days are gone, and years are fled,  
Fled too are those hours of brightness ;  
And the nut-brown curls that waved on my head,  
Are tinged with a silvery whiteness ;  
And gone is one whom I loved full well,  
And I heard the hollow passing-bell  
As I gazed on the Moon, the cold, cold Moon !  
Yet dearer still is the light of the Moon,  
Oh ! dearer by far than the flaunting Noon !

“ There is a low and a lonely tomb,  
Where the grass-green turf is springing,  
And the wild-flowers shed their sweetest perfume,  
And the Nightingale’s song is singing ;  
Oh ! there lies one whom I mourn in vain,  
As I listen to Philomel’s dying strain,  
And sadly gaze on the pensive Moon ;—  
I seek the Moon, the silent Moon,  
And fly from the gaudy blaze of Noon !”

The voice of the mourner, for such I was convinced he was, ceased. There was nothing in the words themselves, taken abstractedly, which could confirm the idea which I had begun to entertain, that the unknown was labouring under some serious affection of the mind, more than is to be found in a hundred other ultra-sentimental ditties with which the Music-shops are so abundantly supplied ; but the tremulous tones in which the song was given, and the deep-drawn sigh, almost amounting to a groan, which followed it, conveyed to my mind an irresistible conviction that it was the offspring of no fictitious grief, but the simple expression of a genuine and heartfelt sorrow.

While I hesitated whether I should accost

him or not, being unwilling to let him suppose that I had been playing the part of an eaves-dropper, and witnessing effusions which I readily conceived were not intended to meet the ear of any human being, the singer rose from his position, and proceeded slowly on before me, keeping the same track I was myself pursuing.

The lapse of a few seconds brought us nearly on a parallel, when I ventured to give him the usual salutation of a passenger, with a remark on the uncommon beauty of the evening. His reply was courteous, and gave me encouragement by slackening my steps to bring my pace to one more in unison with his own, and to commence a desultory sort of conversation.

He was at first brief enough in his replies, eyeing me occasionally with a suspicious glance; but finding, from my discourse, that I was simply a traveller who had left the mail behind me, his reserve in a great measure gave way, and he let me understand that he, like myself, was a passenger, and by the same conveyance,

but with this difference, that, while I rioted (Heaven save the mark !) in all the aristocratical luxury of an inside place, he had contented himself with the humble exaltation, if I may make use of so paradoxical an expression, of the roof. Feeling himself a little cramped, he, too, it seemed, had availed himself of the same opportunity to execute a manœuvre similar to the one I had adopted, having descended from his Olympus the moment the coach stopped.

He now began to express his surprise that it had not overtaken him, a circumstance which I accounted for by mentioning the injury which it had sustained by the fracture of the bar, (the discovery of which his walking on at once had prevented him from knowing,) and thus satisfied him that an apprehension he had begun to entertain, that the coachman might have passed him unobserving and unobserved, was unfounded.

As our conversation continued, I had an opportunity of observing him more narrowly, and was surprised to find that he was by no means



so far advanced in life as some expressions in his song had led me to expect ; he appeared, indeed, to have scarcely passed the prime of manhood, while the firmness of his tread, and the athletic uprightness of his figure, if they wanted the springing elasticity of youth, were at least equally removed from the enervation of age. As he occasionally raised his head, the moonbeams gave additional wanness to a face, the features of which, though bold and masculine, were regular, but of an ashy paleness. He had the air of one who has seen and suffered much ; while the gentlemanly ease of his deportment, and that indescribable something, more easily understood than expressed, which usually marks the manners and demeanour of a military man, announced him a soldier.

Insensibly our conversation from commonplace remarks, took a more interesting turn, and, a casual allusion having drawn forth an explicit avowal of his profession, the discourse not unnaturally diverged to the various changes and chances of a military life, thence to the

different climes and countries through which, in the course of service, it is not unfrequently the soldier's lot to wander.

On all these subjects, I found my companion possessed of such information as evinced that, in his progress through life, he had not hurried on with a careless or unobservant eye; the few sentences with which he had at first replied to my observations, increased in frequency and length, and, as the subject of his profession, its arduous duties, its pleasures and its cares, came more under our review, the deep dejection under which he had originally appeared to labour, softened into an expression of equanimity, at times almost rising into cheerfulness. Every succeeding moment I grew more pleased with the manner and sentiments of my new acquaintance, and heartily should I have regretted the arrival of the vehicle, which was to convey us to the place of our destination, had I not recollected that it rested with myself to decide whether our interview should be thus abruptly cut short or not.

The rolling of wheels, the pattering of horses'

hoofs, in conjunction with the cracking of the coachman's whip, and the shrill tantivy of the guard's horn, were now heard at a short distance in our rear, and announced the approaching termination of our walk.

I had, as I have said already, fostered an incipient design of emigration from the interior to the exterior of that "infernally machine," and I was abundantly confirmed in my intention, when, on its coming up, and the guard tendering me his arm to assist me in resuming the situation I had quitted, I discovered, through the medium of more senses than one, that a most serious catastrophe had taken place there during my absence.

Master Johnny had, it seems, previously to his introduction into that sepulchre of the living, been tolerably well provisioned for his journey. Independently of a hearty supper on ham and oysters, his pockets had been crammed with a fanciful variety of sweetmeats, and he had been farther furnished forth with a huge plum-cake, which he carried, enveloped in brown paper, on his knees. On this said cake he had com-

menced a formidable attack before we had reached the first milestone out of London, and, as the poor child laboured most heartily in his vocation, by the time we had arrived at the end of the first stage, he had reduced his "Ossa to a wart." An addition, so vast, and composed of such discordant materials, to the load with which she was previously encumbered, was a burthen far heavier than Dame Nature chose to bear; the Goddess turned restive, and the exertion, used by the young gentleman in expressing his tribulation, assisting her endeavours, no sooner did the coach "move on" again, than, by a sudden and vigorous effort, she succeeded in disengaging herself from a considerable portion of the weight which oppressed her, transferring the *onus* to the lap of the Quaker in the opposite corner, to the visible discomposure and defilement of his outward man.

The patience of Friend Penn himself could scarcely have withstood so sudden and so severe a trial, much less that of Hezekiah Brimmer, whom Satan seized the opportunity to

buffet sorely, and, like a cunning fiend as he is, nearly succeeded, more than once, in forcing an ugly word of malediction beyond the aperture of the good man's lips.

As it was, Hezekiah seized the unlucky culprit with the arm of the flesh, and shook him unmercifully ; but this ill-advised measure only served to produce a repetition of the offence, by which, from the different attitude which poor John had been forced to assume, his mamma and the honest tar now became fellow sufferers. As the guard opened the door, the storm within was at its height, and it may be questioned whether a greater confusion of tongues was heard in Babel itself within the same number of square feet.

I did not hesitate a moment as to the course to be pursued, but, bidding the man close the door, sprang up the side of the carriage, and placed myself by my late companion, who had already re-occupied his seat. Half-a-crown to the coachman procured me the loan of a super-numerary surtout, well calculated to keep out the night air, and, thus caparisoned, I felt myself in an absolute Paradise compared with the

Tartarus now immediately below me. If I might judge by the satisfaction he expressed, the arrangement was not less agreeable to my fellow-traveller than to myself; he was still, indeed, at times pensive and abstracted, but his conversation, though of a grave and sombre cast, possessed an undefined charm that continued to amuse and interest me exceedingly.

I know not how it happened that our discourse, which had hitherto been confined principally to the manners, customs, and habits of foreign nations, as compared with, or distinguished from, our own, now turned insensibly upon their superstitions; — The Brownie of Scotland, — the Obi of the Negroes, — the Hungarian Vampire, — the German Rubezahl, and even the now nearly subverted empire of the Fairies in our own country, all came by turns under our review.

It was not till the famous and inexhaustible subject of Ghosts became our theme, that the slightest discordance of opinion existed between us; but, when this celebrated topic came at last upon the tapis, I could not but perceive an

evident and decided reluctance in my companion to enter upon the discussion. The levity, with which I at first treated the notion of a visit from the dead to the living, seemed, I could not imagine why, to displease him ; — his answers to my remarks, if not absolutely petulant, were delivered in a tone by no means consonant with that urbanity and self-possession which he had up to this moment invariably maintained. His constrained replies ended at length in a pause of more than common duration.

In the meantime the singular stillness and brilliancy of the night, the countless myriads of burning stars that gemmed the dark blue heavens above us, the mild and mellow lustre that prevailed, interrupted only by the momentary coruscations of some transient meteor, numbers of which, like stars darting from their spheres, occasionally shed a gleam of surpassing radiance as they winged their way across the expanse,— the finely contrasted shades of the brown woods which clothed on either hand a sort of defile, at the entrance of which we had now arrived,

and up whose steep ascent our conductor allowed his horses to proceed at an easier pace—all,—the whole scene, which developed Nature in her most captivating state of tranquil majesty,—so enchanted me, that, with the subject we had been discussing fresh in my mind, I could not forbear exclaiming in the words of the poet,

“How sweet and solemn is this midnight scene!  
At such an hour as this,—in such a spot,—  
If ancestry can be in aught believed,  
Descending Spirits have conversed with Man,  
And told the secrets of the world unknown!”

My companion shuddered as I pronounced the last two lines, and fixed his gaze alternately on the woods that hemmed us in on either side, as if he indeed expected to behold some supernatural visitant issue from their deep recesses.—The wild expression of his countenance was altogether so remarkable, that I could not avoid taking notice of it.

“Really, Sir,” I continued, laughing, “I could almost persuade myself that you had indeed resolved to give that credence to our worthy ancestors on this formidable subject,



which their unbelieving posterity seem determined to refuse them."

"And why should I not?" returned he, in a voice serious even to sadness, and betraying, as I imagined, some slight token of displeasure; "what is there so absurd in the idea that the disembodied spirit should yet desire to linger among the scenes it has delighted in, or joy to watch over and protect the happiness of those whom it has loved?"

"Absurd? — nay, — I do not go the length of pronouncing the idea absurd; — the theory, on the contrary, is a mighty pretty one, and at times I am almost tempted to regret that it rests on so unsubstantial a foundation. For my own part I should desire nothing better than to discover the Ghost of some good-natured Grandmother occasionally at my elbow, with sage hints for the better conducting of my life and manners; — or some maiden Aunt, of a dozen generations standing, extending her long and bony finger to intimate where I might replenish an exhausted exchequer by the discovery of some recondite pot of money." —

The voice of my companion assumed additional sternness as he replied—"These, and silly tales like these, the foolish inventions of boys and idiots, the babblings of nurses, and the visionary dreams of mercenary blockheads, eager in believing what they earnestly wish for—these they are that have thrown suspicion on the actual visits of immortal beings, undertaken for far higher purposes, and with far nobler designs than the pointing out a few ounces of sordid dross, or with the still more contemptible view of exciting causeless terror in beings so infinitely below their purified nature.—These are the tales which the careless and the vain mix up, and associate in their imagination, with recorded facts of a more dignified description,—facts to the authenticity of which some of the wisest and best of men have borne testimony in all ages of the world."

"I am fully aware," rejoined I, "that many of the narratives you allude to appear to rest upon no mean authority; that Plutarch, for instance, has given us several, while, in more modern times, the comprehensive mind of that 'Giant

in intellect,' our own Johnson, was deeply imbued with a similar persuasion ; yet, nevertheless, I cannot help imputing the whole system, which has obtained from the darker ages down to our more enlightened days, either to successful imposture, or to the effects of a strong imagination operating upon weak nerves. That many of these traditionary anecdotes were firmly believed by the persons who have handed them down, and even by some who were actors in the scenes described, I entertain no doubt ; still I am not a whit the nearer giving my assent to the actual appearance of any one spectre, from that of Cæsar down to the scarcely less celebrated one of Sir George Villiers, or Mrs. Veal with her 'rustling silk gown.' ”

“ And on what is this disbelief founded ?— You doubtless admit that Providence governs the world by general laws ; what is there, then, ridiculous in supposing that those laws may be occasionally dispensed with—if, indeed, they can be said to be dispensed with at all ; for we positively know nothing of their constitutions,—when the high and inscrutable purposes of Hea-

ven require it?—when the detection of secret guilt, or the punishment of open villany, demand its interference?”

“Well,” cried I, in the same tone which I had maintained throughout the whole conversation, “on occasions of such moment as those to which you allude, still less should I wish to deny myself to any deceased gentleman or lady who might think proper to favour me with a call. The redressing of wrong and the re-establishing of right is a glorious task, and, with a Ghost to back one, and take all the responsibility upon itself, must be especially delightful;—I really could almost wish I might be selected by some aërial avenger for so very respectable an office.

“Now, Heaven in its mercy forbid!” exclaimed he, with a wild energy that made me start,—then clasping his hands, which still quivered with some strong emotion,—“You know not what you are asking;—rash and unthinking young man, bitterly would you rue the hour should your mad wish be granted!”

His whole frame shook with agitation,—his

eyes glistened in the moonlight with an unnatural brightness, and his tones sank into even sepulchral hoarseness, as he continued—"No! Heaven forbid that another wretch should suffer the torments which have been mine since first this dreadful commission was enjoined me!"

He paused, and, unclasping his hands, covered with them the whole of his countenance.

During the latter part of his ejaculation he had appeared to have become totally unconscious of my presence; and the strange import of the words he had used, together with the violent agitation which assailed him, combined to give strength to an opinion I had before begun to form, that the intellects of my new acquaintance were, on this point at least, not altogether unclouded. True, that on every other subject his conversation had been of a superior description;—that he had diffused, with no sparing hand, much valuable information, chastened by a correctness of thinking, a genuine taste and elegance of expression, that evinced the richness and cultivation of his mind: still I was quite aware that among the melancholy victims

of mental aberration, such circumstances are by no means uncommon; that, in numerous instances, the fatal malady lies dormant and unsuspected, till some one pre-conceived and rooted idea, which has warped the imagination, is accidentally called into play, and succeeds, for a time, in driving reason from her throne.

Such, I now began to be apprehensive, might be the unhappy condition of my fellow-traveller, when his emotion having, at length, in some degree subsided, I ventured to direct his attention to the faint streak of golden light that now marked the extremity of the horizon, as the grey tints of morning succeeded the darker shadows of a night fast hastening to its close.

But my hopes of thus diverting his thoughts from what, I felt convinced, was a subject of pain and distress to him, proved abortive. In vain did I point out to his observation the beauties of the surrounding landscape, which every moment rendered more distinct;—in vain did the mounting skylark welcome with his cheerful notes the first beam of the rising sun, that glittered on his little breast, while all below lay

yet unconscious of its cheering influence ;—in vain did vegetation, redolent of sweetness, convey to the charmed sense the choicest perfume ;—wrapt in a melancholy gloom, he appeared dead to the charms of Nature that surrounded him, while the few replies, which I at times succeeded in eliciting, were so cold and constrained, and were pronounced with an air so *distrain*, that I at length ceased to importune him by remarks, which only seemed to annoy him, and, turning my thoughts inward for the remainder of the journey, became insensibly almost as abstracted as himself.

My cogitations, it must be confessed, were by no means of an agreeable nature. Wounded in every feeling by the unaccountable conduct of Lord Manningham, I would have given worlds for power to banish him and his lovely daughter from my recollection, and to have “left them to their pride ;” but this I found myself utterly incapable of performing ; my chains were too securely riveted to be so easily shaken off ; I loved with all the intensity of a young and first passion ; and as I recalled to mind the pleasing

thought that she at least had given me no offence, hope failed not to whisper that the behaviour of her father,—if indeed it had ever reached her knowledge,—must be viewed by her with the same disapprobation as it was by myself.

Youth is naturally vain and sanguine, and I flattered myself that the time spent in her company at the theatre had not been thrown away,—though what on earth could have taken her into that part of it, so accompanied, was a mystery beyond my power to solve.—If I had read the language of her expressive eyes aright, the *penchant* had been reciprocal ; and, as this delightful idea took possession of my imagination, the remembrance of his lordship's strange harshness comparatively faded from my mind. I began to rack my invention to furnish excuses for his conduct ; an eager desire laid hold upon me to unravel the mistake, which I became more and more convinced must have taken place, and to receive the apologies which, at the *dénouement*, he would undoubtedly tender to my acceptance with no small confusion of face.



I was roused from my reverie by a circumstance which threatened utterly to subvert all my castle-building in the very outset ; this was no other than the overturning of the coach, and my consequent descent in a narrow but rapid stream, that ran beneath a bridge, on the centre of which we were when the accident occurred.

What was the immediate cause of our sudden descent is more than I am able to state ; — whether the tackling and cordage, so plentifully lavished by “ Bill,” upon the fractured splinter-bar, had given way, in spite of all the combined science of himself and honest Jack,— or whether any other part of the machinery had been equally unsound, I cannot say ; — all I know is, that I found myself in a moment up to my neck in the river.

Of all sublunary applications there is, perhaps, not one which possesses greater efficacy in a love case than that of a good sousing in cold water ;—if its effects fail to be permanent, they at least give the fit a complete check for the time ; and in cases where a radical cure is out of the question, that is no trifling point gained.

—Heaven is my witness—I confess it with shame—that for a full hour after my ducking, I thought no more of Amelia Stafford than I did of the Lady Godiva.

Notwithstanding the impediment thrown in my way by my borrowed “Upper Benjamin,” I was not long in regaining the bank. — The coachman I found already upon his legs: he had fallen against the parapet of the bridge, which, at the expense of a pretty severe bruise, had prevented his going over. The same parapet had also saved the carriage itself from being dashed upon the ground: it rested against its edge; and though the shock was severe, the occupants of the interior of the coach were, through this fortunate interposition, much more alarmed than injured. They were relieved from the awkwardness of their recumbent position, without much difficulty, by the assistance of the guard, who, clinging to the iron-work of his seat, had escaped being thrown off at all.

It was not till the lapse of a few seconds had enabled me to recover from the confusion I had fallen into from the united effects of the tumble,

and of the quantity of cold water which I had unwillingly swallowed, that I missed my companion.

He was not on the bridge ;—he was nowhere to be seen.—I rushed back to the spot where I had contrived to scramble out of the water, and, as I cast a hurried glance down the river, saw one of his arms rise above the surface, at some distance down the current, which was bearing him rapidly away.

I flew rather than ran along the bank, till I arrived opposite the spot where I could behold him faintly struggling to disencumber himself of the cloak, which impeded all his efforts, and would have reduced him, in a very few minutes more, to a similar condition with those immaterial beings for whose “ revisiting the glimpses of the moon ” he had shown himself so sturdy a stickler. If, however, his cloak had hitherto occasioned his danger, it now served as an instrument of release from his perilous position, as the firm grasp which I was enabled to take of it conduced not a little to his preservation.

When I had succeeded in dragging him up

the bank, he was so completely exhausted as to be incapable of supporting himself, and indeed was scarcely sensible of his situation ; but by degrees his recollection, as well as some portion of his energy, returned, and he was at length able, with the assistance of my arm, to regain the high-road.

The place where this disaster had befallen us was fortunately just at the entrance of a considerable village, the inhabitants of which had, from no great distance, witnessed our mishap, and now came running down to offer their aid, and ask questions. These, in our present dripping condition, I felt very little inclined to answer ; so, cutting short a long string of interrogatories, such as “ Whether the gentleman was much hurt ? ” — “ Whether we had been in the water ? ” — a fact no human looker-on could possibly doubt for an instant,—and others of a similar cast, I proceeded, with as much expedition as the weakened state of my *protégé* would admit, to where a tall sign-post exposed to view the Kit-Cat effigy of a gentleman with an iron cuirass and a bald head, which the neigh-

bourhood had agreed, in courtesy to the landlord, to consider a striking likeness of the Marquis of Granby.—

“ Whoe’er has travell’d life’s dull round,  
Where’er his various course has been,  
May sigh to think how oft he found  
His warmest welcome at an inn ! ”

So says Shenstone ; and for my own part, I am little inclined to dispute the truth of the Poet’s axiom. On this occasion, especially, the round and ruby-coloured face of our good-humoured landlady, Mrs. Blenkinsop, already shining with all the radiance of a well-scrubbed mahogany table, exhibited tenfold lustre as she welcomed us into a snug little room behind the bar.

This “ shady, blest retreat ” was furnished with a variety of huge case-bottles, that promised much of comfort, and disclosed besides to our enraptured gaze the still more cheering prospect of a blazing fire — to persons in our predicament, perhaps, the greatest desideratum on earth.

It was in vain that I requested my companion to retire to bed ; nor were the assurances

of Mrs. Blenkinsop that "her beds were well aired, and good enough for a lord to lie on," of more avail : he persisted in his refusal, declaring that a tumbler of mulled port, and a change of dress, were all that was requisite to the restoration of his comfort.—I thought otherwise ; but he was deaf to persuasion, and, like most obstinate people, carried his point. The wine, by our landlady's assistance, was soon procured ; and under the same auspices a lad was despatched to the fractured vehicle for our baggage.

The Marquis of Granby, whose hospitable walls now afforded us an asylum, was, I well knew, in point of distance, scarcely more than twelve miles from Underdown, and as, now that the disarrangement which my person had undergone, inside as well as out, was tolerably rectified, I found myself very little, if at all, the worse for my aquatic adventure, I requested mine hostess, who was evidently Lady of the ascendant, to inform me if her hotel, among its other excellences, could afford the luxury of a post-chaise.

In fact, I did not feel by any means inclined to trust my neck farther to a conveyance organized of such frail materials as woful experience had convinced me the one from which I had so nearly met the fate of Phaeton, was composed of; nor should I have repeated the experiment, even had the delay I must have submitted to during the necessary repairs been out of the question. With a multiplicity of courtesies, each succeeding one lower than the former, the good-natured little woman assured me that I could be accommodated with “a very elegant” one, the unoccupied corner of which I frankly offered to my new acquaintance, who was, I found, as desirous as myself of proceeding with all convenient despatch. At the same time I assured him, that if the urgency of his affairs would allow him to accept the hospitality of the Hall, I could venture, in the absence of my worthy Uncle, its proprietor, to assure him a cordial welcome from my mother, adding, with more of levity than caution, that “a renowned ancestor of mine, one Sir Roger de Bullwinkle, who was said nightly to perambulate the man-

sion armed cap-a-pie, might possibly furnish him with an additional argument in favour of his theory of Ghosts and Goblins.”

The words had hardly escaped my lips when the change in his countenance showed me that I had been wrong in hazarding this ill-timed pleasantry. — When I named the redoubted Roger, he recoiled with a shuddering earnestness, as if he had been about to tread upon a viper ; and his eyes gleamed with an expression almost amounting to ferocity. His nether lip quivered with suppressed emotion, and his voice faltered, as, after a brief pause, he indistinctly declined a proposal which, from the smile that had lit up his countenance at its commencement, I had made myself certain he would have accepted.

Heartily vexed with myself at my want of consideration, I apologized for the allusion, and again pressed him to accompany me. He continued, however, firm in his refusal, while he shook his head mournfully, and, as it now seemed to me, “ more in sorrow than in anger,” telling me that he began to fear he had indeed



overrated his strength when he proposed continuing his journey so soon, — that he should therefore give up the idea, and seek such repose as his pillow might afford him.”

I was not less pleased than surprised at this determination, as I really thought a good warm bed and medical attendance most fitting, by far, for a person who had suffered from remaining in the water so long as he had done; I no longer therefore endeavoured to shake his resolution, but contented myself with pressing him earnestly to favour me with a visit before he quitted that part of the country.

With an air and look solemn even to dejection, he promised that he “*would* see me again;” and, taking up my valise which I had thrown carelessly upon the table, handed it to the multifarious personage who, in the several capacities of boots, waiter, ostler, and occasionally chambermaid, was minister for the home department at the Granby’s Head.

Before he altogether relinquished it to the grasp of the aforesaid functionary, his eye rested upon the brass-plate which occupied its centre.

“Charles Stafford, Esq.” read he.—“That, then, is the name of my preserver?”

“Of your fellow-passenger,” returned I, as, giving up the valise to the man who placed it in the chaise, he took my hand — “Of your fellow-passenger, and of one who hopes soon to see you perfectly recovered from the effects of a ducking which he would have been glad to have prevented altogether.”

I had one foot upon the step of the chaise,—Mister Boots was holding open the door and gazing on me with glances, sharpened by expectation — my mysterious companion wrung my hand strongly,—“Adieu!” uttered he in an agitated tone,—“adieu! young gentleman, and may Heaven grant that you may never have reason to curse bitterly the hour in which you drew me from the stream!”——

He turned abruptly from me, and the post-boy, cracking his whip, set off in a canter towards Underdown, before I had half recovered from the surprise which my new friend’s strange adjuration had thrown me into.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Home ! Home !—Sweet, sweet Home !  
 There's no place like Ho-ome !  
 There's no place like Home !

BISHOP.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased ?  
 Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
 Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
 And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
 Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff  
 That weighs upon the heart ?

*Macbeth in trouble.*

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A RETURN.—AN INVALID.—A SNUBBING.—A CHARGE.—A  
 CALLING IN.—A CALLING OUT.

LITTLE more than an hour had elapsed when the tall chimneys of the Hall,—which, like most of those belonging to buildings of the same era, towered high above its slanting roofs and gable ends,—appeared, rising over the summits of the lofty trees that embosomed the

edifice, and giving to it, when viewed from a distance, almost the air of a castellated mansion.

There is a something in the return to our home, however short the period of our absence from it may have been, which always produces a kindly and complacent feeling in our bosoms ; and this feeling acquires tenfold strength, when we know that the roof we are revisiting contains beneath it hearts which will throb at our arrival with sensations responsive to our own. In spite of the unpleasant and irritating circumstances which had occasioned my unexpected return, I could not help experiencing this genial glow, as the chaise, issuing from the long avenue of sturdy oaks,—the scene of my Cousin Nicholas's early achievements in the art of horsemanship,—drew up to the steps which led to the antique portal, over whose high and pointed arch the “ three golden fetterlocks ” of the Bullwinkles stood forth in strong relief.

The current of my ideas underwent a sudden and immediate revulsion as the venerable butler presented himself to receive me. The subdued.

alacrity, the sober energy of manner, with which this ancient retainer of the family was wont to welcome home any of its members, had sunk into an appearance of sadness and depression. As I hastily sprang past the inferior domestic who opened the chaise-door for me, I saw at once that some calamity was impending over the house, and had occasioned this unwonted gravity in the most attached of its dependents.—Sir Oliver was absent ;—my mother then was ill !—was dead !

A cold shudder ran through my veins as the dreadful idea presented itself to my imagination, and I experienced a degree of relief, amounting to thankfulness, when I found that my fears were not verified in their fullest extent, although but too sufficient reason remained for apprehension.

Mrs. Stafford had indeed been seized with sudden indisposition a few days before my arrival, on perusing a letter which she had received from London, the contents of which had evidently created in her no slight degree of agitation.

Her illness had at first excited much alarm, but, as it was now hoped, had taken a favourable turn. She had expressed a strong desire to see her son, and had requested that I might be summoned as soon as possible. An express had accordingly been got ready, but was countermanded afterwards by her own positive orders, since which she had sunk into a kind of apathetic lethargy, the more unaccountable, inasmuch as the first approaches of her disorder had been attended by symptoms of so different and so much more violent a nature.

Such was the account imparted to me by Jennings as I entered the vestibule, and I had no reason either to doubt the accuracy of his intelligence, or to be for one moment at a loss to divine the cause which had produced so lamentable an effect.

I have already said, that a strong affection for my mother was one of the most rooted principles of my nature ; it was entwined with the very fibres of my heart ; and a degree of bitterness, greater than I had supposed it possible for any circumstance to have originated in my mind

towards a human being, now swelled my bosom against Lord Manningham, and almost rose to my lips in curses.

That "the letter," the perusal of which had thus affected my mother, was of his lordship's inditing, I could not entertain a doubt. That it contained some tale—a tale so dreadful to a fond parent's ear—of a loved son's disgrace, was still less to be questioned;—and as the events of the week gone by, which Miss Stafford's beauty had partly succeeded in banishing from my mind, now rushed in irresistible strength upon my recollection, deeply as I felt the indignity I had sustained, a thousand times more deeply did I resent the sufferings inflicted by it upon my beloved parent.

The good old Jennings, who observed the emotion I so plainly exhibited, opened the door of the breakfast parlour, and respectfully followed me into it. He seemed affected by my distress; nevertheless, through the habitual deference which the faithful fellow preserved towards me, I could not but perceive a degree of constraint, and a reserve of manner, which told me, quite as

plainly as words could have done, that, in his opinion, my own conduct had drawn down this visitation upon me, and that to it only had I to look for a solution of the cause of my mother's indisposition.

With this man I had been a favourite from a child. From the first hour in which I had been introduced at the Hall, Jennings had exhibited, in a thousand ways, the preference with which he had distinguished me above his young master—a preference which grew only the more obvious as we advanced in years, and which, doubtless, derived its origin from the love and respect he, in common with all the old domestics, had ever entertained for my mother, whose secession from her paternal roof they had seen with feelings of regret, little alleviated by the conduct of her successor, Lady Nelly. Of all the servants of the family who had witnessed her abdication, Jennings alone had remained to hail her re-establishment, and had, in fact, from his known and tried attachment, been considered, both by her and myself, rather in the



light of an humble friend than of a common menial.

Conscious as I was of the falsehood of the charge which his sorrowful and penetrating look seemed to impute to me, my spirit rose against the fancied accusation, and with an air of infinitely greater *hauteur* than I had ever before exhibited towards him, or any other domestic, I ordered him to let Mrs. Stafford be informed of my arrival, and of my wish to be admitted immediately to her presence.

“ Ah, Master Charles !” replied the old man, mournfully shaking his hoary head as he retired, while an unbidden tear seemed starting from his eye,—“ But I shall do your bidding, Sir.”—

He closed the door slowly, and, as I thought, reluctantly, behind him ;—a pang of self-disapprobation seized upon me as it shut him from my view, and I half moved forward to retract my petulance, and dismiss him with a kindlier greeting. The thought unavoidably occurred, why did I feel offended with him ?—Whence arose that mild dejection of his furrowed coun-

tenance which I had construed into unmerited upbraiding?—Whence but from the regard he bore to my mother, and—why should I deny it?—to myself? Still the consciousness that it *was* unmerited restrained me, and checked the impulse which inclined me to follow him.

In a few minutes, which were passed by me in the utmost anxiety, and which appeared to my impatience prolonged to as many hours, he returned.—

“ Mrs. Stafford was asleep.”

Unable to remain longer by myself in such an annoying state of suspense, I walked hastily towards the staircase, extending my hand to Jennings as I passed. The old man took it reverently, and would have raised it to his lips, but, with a cordial pressure that bespoke my compunction for having treated him with unwonted harshness, I released it from his grasp, and directed my steps to the apartment of my mother.

A silence, still and solemn as that of death, reigned throughout the room; while the half-closed shutters, and shadowing curtains that

admitted but a few faint rays of light, contributed not a little to the gloom of the scene.

I advanced to the foot of the bed, and gazed upon my mother. She was wrapped in slumber, but her sleep seemed, ever and anon, disturbed; and the frequent contraction of her brow, as a deep-drawn sigh, or a few broken and unconnected words, occasionally escaped her, announced that all was not at peace within.—At such moments her favourite attendant Martha, who with Miss Pyefinch watched her pillow on opposite sides, would rise and look anxiously at her pale countenance, the snowy hue of which was only invaded by a small spot of vivid red that marked the centre of each cheek, and exhibited to the view a hectic glow as dangerous as it was beautiful. But her affectionate gaze was met by no answering glance; my mother still reposed, if repose that could be called, when the restless and variable expression of her features showed that her mind, at least, was far from enjoying tranquillity. She was indeed much altered since I had seen her last, and I trembled with newly awakened ap-

prehension as the idea took possession of me, that a short, a very short period might deprive me of my only parent.

Finding it impossible to suppress my emotion, and warned, by the impressive gestures of her attendants, that the uncontrolled ebullition of my feelings might disturb and arouse her, I quitted the room as silently as I had entered it, but with a heavy heart. Miss Pyefinch followed, and in her way endeavoured to offer me consolation. Notwithstanding her eccentricity, and some other points in her character which might perhaps have been altered to advantage, she was not a bad-hearted woman in the main ; I verily believe she participated in the sorrow into which she beheld me plunged, and would have done anything in her power to have alleviated it ; but her endeavours were far better in the intent than the execution, and at length I, not without difficulty, succeeded in persuading her to leave me to myself, after she had given me all the information in her power to communicate respecting the commencement of this alarming accession to my mother's malady ; her

information, however, amounted to little more than I had previously gathered from the relation of the honest Jennings.

After more than half an hour, spent in a state, the irksomeness of which may be easily imagined, I was favoured with a communication from Dr. Drench, who had arrived to visit his patient. The information he gave me contributed not a little to reassure me, as he said he found her much better than from her appearance at his last visit he had dared to anticipate. She had awakened from her slumber while he was in the room, and had evidently derived much benefit and refreshment from it; the fever, which had heretofore raged in her veins, had undergone a material reduction. Still he recommended that the greatest caution should be observed to prevent anything from reaching her which might at all tend to produce a return of the agitation which had before so sensibly affected her, and even advised that the circumstance of my having arrived should, for the present at least, be kept from her knowledge. To this arrangement, however, I positively refused

my consent, and, finding that my perseverance (obstinaey, he called it) was not to be overcome, he at last yielded, though with a very bad grace, and a stipulation that, if it must be so, the communication should at all events be made by himself, while the interview should terminate the moment he should pronounce it necessary.

To this proposal I unhesitatingly assented, and saw him depart to execute his self-imposed commission, with a much greater degree of satisfaction than a few short minutes since I had thought it possible for me to experience.

To do the worthy dispenser of chemicals and galenicals justice, he acquitted himself of his task with much ability, and was pleased to find, when he had imparted his news in a manner as little abrupt as might be, that his patient seemed to derive much satisfaction from the intelligence, and even intimated a desire that I should be at once conducted to her presence.

For the first time in our lives my mother received me with a cold look and an averted eye. —I sensibly felt her displeasure, but refrained

from noticing it, lest the conversation, which my so doing would inevitably lead to, should transgress the bounds prescribed by the doctor.

Our interview, thus restricted, was brief, and unsatisfactory to both parties; but before I quitted the room, as I affectionately kissed her cheek — a salute which she received, but condescended not to return — I could not forbear whispering that I had no doubt of being able to convince her that my conduct had been shamefully misrepresented, whenever she should be sufficiently recovered to listen to my vindication. Tears filled her eyes as she shook her head doubtingly, but I was delighted to find that she could not refrain from giving the hand that had taken hers a half-reluctant pressure, — when Drench, who was narrowly watching us, suspecting that we were infringing upon the terms on which he had allowed my introduction to the sick-room, broke in abruptly, and put an end to the conference by hurrying me along with him down stairs.

Impatient and anxious as I naturally was to ascertain the specific nature of the faults laid

to my charge, I was compelled for the present to repress my curiosity, as Mrs. Stafford had not communicated the contents of the letter she had received to any one, although, from the language which had unwittingly escaped her, no one entertained the slightest doubt that it contained some story of my delinquency or disgrace. She had never parted with it, but, as I learned on inquiry from Miss Kitty, it still rested beneath her pillow, from which situation she had directed that it should not be removed.

On the following morning I rose early, and heard with delight that she had passed a much more tranquil night than she had hitherto done since her seizure ; but my request to be admitted to see her was met by a decided negative from herself, until I should have perused a letter which she had commissioned Miss Pyefinch to deliver to me. The appearance of the packet, which was enclosed in a sealed envelope, and addressed to me in her own handwriting, satisfied me that it contained the mischievous epistle which had occasioned her illness. I was not mistaken ; the letter was, moreover, as I



had rightly anticipated, from Lord Manningham, and ran as follows :—

“ My dear Sister,—It is with no common feelings that I address you upon a subject as painful to me as I know it will be distressing to yourself; nor is it without the greatest reluctance that I find myself compelled to inflict upon a parent’s heart so severe a wound as that which cannot but be caused by the story of the disgraceful conduct of a son. When I add that my own hopes are blighted, and the long-cherished project nearest my heart is, by the same conduct, frustrated and destroyed, I need scarcely say that my grief and disappointment are hardly inferior to your own.

“ From that fatal moment when my Amelia became the sole object left to which I could direct my parental affection, it was my most fervent wish that the son of my lamented Charles might be the person to secure her that happiness which I would not allow myself to doubt he would be found worthy to share; and I had pictured to myself the pleas-

ing prospect of witnessing their felicity, and growing old amidst the children of two beings the nearest and dearest to me in the world;— judge then of my disappointment when I find myself compelled to renounce this first object of my hopes and prayers, while the painful conviction is forced upon me, that to secure the happiness of my child I must seek in some other family for that worth, integrity, and honour which I had fondly flattered myself I should have discovered in my own.

“On my arrival in this country I addressed, as you cannot but remember, a letter to yourself, in which I candidly stated my wishes, and was highly gratified to find that yours so entirely coincided with them. If, on the subsequent visit of my nephew, I was not so much struck with the graces of his figure as, from your truly maternal description, I had expected to be, mere personal advantages, — though I would not be thought to undervalue them,— weigh so little with me, that, had his mental qualifications but stood the test, I could gladly have compounded for a much smaller share of

external grace than a mother's partiality would naturally invest him with.—But this, I lament to say, has not been the case.

“At their first interview in Grosvenor Square, I perceived that my daughter and my nephew were by no means such absolute strangers to each other as I had imagined; though I am fully persuaded that Amelia, at least, was not aware of their affinity when chance threw them into each other's company at one of the theatres.

“It was not without considerable surprise as well as displeasure, I now learned that during the time which on my first arrival I had inevitably dedicated to the discharge of official duties, my daughter, weary of a solitude to which she was unaccustomed, and dotingly fond of music, had prevailed upon Wilkinson, whose affection, I verily believe, could deny her nothing, to take advantage of my unavoidable absence at the Colonial Office, and to accompany her to hear an oratorio *incog*. This mad-brained plan a sister of the latter, who resides somewhere about St. James's, enabled her to execute, without even my servants suspecting that they

had anything in view beyond a visit to Mrs. Morgan.

“ On this occasion, it seems, Amelia first encountered her cousin, who then received, as he asserted, so strong an impression as to be absolutely overwhelmed with joy, when, on calling to present your introductory letter, he discovered his unknown charmer in his cousin. Of the truth of this his statement, however, I could not help having my doubts, and was indeed soon convinced that, prior to his presenting himself at my house, he was perfectly aware of her identity with the lady whom he had so casually encountered.

“ This little piece of disingenuousness certainly did not tend to raise him in my estimation ; still, though far from pleased with any part of the transaction, I saw nothing absolutely wrong in the thoughtless frolic, and was more disposed to blame Wilkinson than anybody else, as she ought to have known better than to indulge Amelia in such a freak.

“ The second day after his arrival I had resolved to dedicate to the study of my young

relative's character, and, aware that the real disposition is usually most apt to exhibit itself in society, invited a few friends, whose refined manners, and enlightened conversation were calculated to draw forth any hidden resources of intellect, natural or acquired, which diffidence in the probationer, or lack of opportunity from the absence of mental collision, might suffer to remain concealed. Heartily did I repent the experiment, and deeply indeed did I blush for my *protégé*, on hearing him noisily and rudely interrupt every subject broached, by boisterous and vulgar jokes, which increased in frequency and coarseness as the inebriety, into which he was fast plunging, became more conspicuous. My interference, when I was at last compelled to employ it, he seemed much inclined to set at defiance; and it was with difficulty that I could prevent his exhibiting himself in so disgraceful a condition to my daughter.

“I will not enlarge upon the mortification I experienced at having it witnessed by my friends.

“The following morning — or rather noon,

for till that hour did the effects of the orgies of the preceding evening confine him to his chamber — I requested his attendance in my study, and remonstrating with him on his behaviour, forcibly perhaps, but, I trust, without harshness, I stated at the same time most unequivocally my resolution never to bestow my daughter on a drunkard.—He apologized with a very bad grace, and with much more, as I thought, of sullenness than penitence, when I left him alone with Amelia, while I acquitted myself of an indispensable engagement.

“ I will not, my dearest sister, unnecessarily aggravate your distress by dwelling on the faults and follies which every succeeding hour developed during the whole of his short visit ; it will be sufficient to inform you, that — rightly conjecturing, as I imagine, from the disapprobation which I now strongly and repeatedly expressed of his conduct, that my intentions in his favour had undergone a material alteration, —he endeavoured to ascertain whether Amelia might not prove more accessible, and not only strove to prevail on her to consent to an elope-

ment, but on her indignant refusal, actually formed a plan, as silly in conception as atrocious in design, for carrying her off to Scotland, with, or without, her inclination —”

—I had read thus far in my uncle’s long epistle, with much such sensations as a man experiences when, half-awakened from a confused and heterogeneous dream, he feels his faculties bewildered with the strange images yet before his eyes, and is scarcely conscious even of his own identity : but if thus far the letter were calculated to amaze and confound, the remainder was even still more inexplicable.—Lord Manningham proceeded thus :

“ In pursuance of this ridiculous scheme, he induced her to accompany him for a short drive in a curricule which I had placed at his disposal, attended only by a single groom newly taken into my service ;—this man he had, for pecuniary considerations no doubt, contrived to attach to his interests.

“ They took the North road, but it was not till some time after they had surmounted Highgate Hill that my daughter entertained any sus-

picion of his intention. His declining to comply with her request that he would return, and the sudden absence of the servant who, on some trivial pretence, had ridden forward, now first insinuated into her mind an apprehension of treachery. By no means intimidated, however, and finding all resistance for the present useless, she remained perfectly passive, and quietly listened to the strange farrago of nonsense with which her companion now thought proper to entertain her. His vows and protestations, &c. were couched in the highest style of the mock heroic; he attributed his conduct to the overwhelming force of his affection, and his despair of securing my consent to their immediate union, adding that the violence of his passion would brook no long delay, and expressing his confidence that, their marriage once completed, my forgiveness of this rash step would be the almost immediate consequence. — With these and similar rhapsodies, alternately threatening and entreating, he conveyed her as far as St. Alban's, where at the inn door she perceived James, the servant who had preceded them, in conversation



with a couple of post-boys, who stood ready to mount their horses, four of which were harnessed to a hack chaise.

“ Mr. Stafford assisted my Amelia to alight, and was preparing to accompany her into the house, when his intention was apparently altered by some communication which his worthy coadjutor whispered in his ear; he paused and led the way directly to the chaise, the door of which he in an authoritative tone commanded the drivers to open.

“ But secret as James’s hint was intended to be, a sound most grateful to her ear had caught the attention of Amelia, and the words “ Major Fortescue in the house,” distinctly heard, in spite of the lowered voice in which they were pronounced, decided her mode of proceeding.—

Suddenly disengaging her arm from that of her would-be bridegroom, she darted into the passage, calling aloud on the name of him who would, as she well knew, prove both an efficient and respectable protector. Her appeal was not unheard; a door opened, and the dear friend who, but for an event too mournful for me to

do more than allude to, would have been connected with us by the closest ties, sprang forward to save the sister of her who, even in her grave, still maintains an undivided empire over him.

“It is needless to say, that the protection Amelia claimed from one of her oldest favourites was unhesitatingly granted, and that Fortescue hastened out to confront the author of this ridiculous abduction; but the latter had no doubt witnessed the recognition, and, finding that the game was up, had disappeared with his rascally abettor in the chaise which they had destined for a different purpose. When my friend reached the street, the vehicle was nearly out of sight on the road back to London.

“Amelia’s nerves are fortunately pretty strong; though astonished at the folly, and vexed at the persevering effrontery of her cousin in this precious scheme, she had never for one instant entertained any alarm, nor doubted its ultimate failure; any little hurry of spirits, therefore, she might experience, ought perhaps to be attributed as much to her unexpected

meeting with Eustace as to the strange occurrence which produced their rencontre. Such, at least, she assures me, is the case, and adds, that her forced march had by no means spoiled her appetite, so that, after partaking of a pretty substantial luncheon while my horses were taking their bait, she accompanied Fortescue back in the abandoned curicle. Fortunately I had been detained unusually late at a diplomatic meeting, and the anxiety I underwent on my return home, at discovering Amelia's absence, was of no long duration.

“ Neither of the actors in this blessed stratum have as yet thought proper to make their appearance here, nor do I think it likely that they will, as James's clothes, &c. have, I find, been, for some days past, removed from the house, a fact which convinces me that the plan was not adopted hastily, or without reflection. Indeed, from part of a conversation I had overheard between them as I entered Mr. Stafford's room on the morning after his debauch, I feel satisfied that your son had, at a very early period, meditated the securing himself an interest among

my domestics; the door, on that occasion, was ajar, and as I approached I had distinctly heard him offering money to the servant in attendance on him, whom I now recollect to have been this very James, though what his object was I could not then distinguish. The impression upon my mind at the time was, that he was endeavouring to purchase silence as to the extent of his intoxication; I now think differently, and am persuaded that he was even then tampering with his fidelity, in the hope of securing so trustworthy an aide-de-camp.

“ This, my dearest Sister, is the unpleasant intelligence I have been compelled to communicate; and I trust that in relinquishing, as I now reluctantly do, all hope of a nearer connexion being formed between us, you will do me the justice to believe, that necessity alone dictates my resolution, and prevents my risking the temporal,—perhaps the eternal,—interests of my only child, upon the precarious tenure of the affection of a young man, who, if, as I would hope may be the case, his heart be not utterly depraved, is yet so loose and un-

settled in his principles, as to render futile all hopes of his alliance being conducive to the happiness of either party.

“As the son of my dear Charles, and the future—I much fear, unworthy—representative of the family, should he hereafter become convinced of his errors, and, as added years bring added wisdom, endeavour to retrace his footsteps in the deplorable path which he seems to be now treading, my countenance, influence, and purse, shall not be wanting to forward his views, and to secure him a reception in society befitting his birth, and the rank he may be destined to fill;—as a son-in-law I never can receive him. I will not add to the length of a letter, already so prolix, by any farther expressions of regret for the line of conduct I am compelled to adopt, nor outrage your maternal feelings by attempting to offer a consolation, which time, and the amended manners of your son, can alone bestow. Your heart, I doubt not, will be wrung by this narrative; believe me, mine is scarcely less so. Judge of my feelings by your own.

“I inclose a ring which Mr. Stafford forced

upon my daughter's finger during his courtship—if such it may be called—and which, as he informed her, contains a lock of his own hair.

“ Adieu, my dear Sister!—deeply as I must lament this unfortunate termination to our mutual hopes, believe that I shall always entertain towards yourself the strongest sentiments of sympathy and regard, and continue to be ever your affectionate brother,       MANNINGHAM.”

Some time elapsed after the perusal of this extraordinary letter, ere I could arrange my ideas sufficiently to form anything like an opinion upon its contents. I almost doubted if I were awake, the whole affair seemed so like an unpleasant dream.—Had I indeed been guilty of the absurd and ridiculous conduct imputed to me? Reason and reflection told me the contrary.—Was the whole story then an invention of Lord Manningham? His rank, his character, his well-known probity and honour, forbade the supposition.—Had he been imposed upon by some rascally swindler, assuming my name to defraud him of his daughter and her rich

inheritance?—It was difficult to believe that human audacity could soar to such a pitch, and yet this seemed the only rational solution to the mysteries which beset me on all sides. The recollection of my mother's letter, too,—of that letter so unaccountably lost and never recovered, seemed to give a colour to this mode of accounting for the occurrences said to have taken place; and a thousand times did I curse my own carelessness which alone could have put it in the power of any individual, however crafty, to carry on so impudent an imposition.

The more I revolved the matter in my mind, after reading Lord Manningham's letter carefully over again, the more convinced I became that this must be indeed the fact, and my thoughts naturally began to turn on the perpetrator?—Who could he be?—Some one well versed in our family history, beyond all question, or he would at once have stood detected;—then, too, the circumstance of his having been at the Oratorio——Nicholas!—it was,—it could be no other than that infernal Nicholas who had played me this abominable prank.

His well-known propensity to mischief,—the comparative ease with which he might have succeeded in purloining my credentials,—the confidence I had reposed in him as to my object in returning to London,—all combined to fix him as the author of this, another of his “jolly good hoaxes.”

But then again there were difficulties, and those, too, apparently insurmountable, in the way of considering him as my pseudo-representative; one, of no very ordinary magnitude, had that very morning made its appearance in the shape of a letter from Sir Oliver Bullwinkle. In it the Baronet informed us, that on his arrival at Oxford he found his son slowly recovering from a severe fit of illness, which precluded the possibility of his having been in London on the evening he had suspected, and declared that he would never trust to the evidence of his own eyes again. He mentioned his intention of delaying his return for a few days on Nicholas's account, as he meant to bring him down with him to the Hall, as soon as he should be able to bear the journey; he said, too, that he should call on Lord Manningham in his way.



This letter, which was almost as long, though not so pithy, as the Viscount's, had manifestly cost Sir Oliver no trifling pains in the manufacturing; it was addressed to my mother, and contained the whole of his eventful history from the period of his quitting Underdown; but as Drench strongly insisted on the necessity of keeping his patient perfectly undisturbed, I had taken a liberty which I knew she would pardon, and had broken open the well-known "fetterlocks" which identified her correspondent.

My first impression was to write to my noble uncle immediately, but, on more mature reflection, as Sir Oliver and Nicholas were so soon to be at Underdown, I determined to delay my communication until I should be able to ascertain whether my hopeful Cousin was or was not the happy contriver of this precious piece of knavery. Nor did I believe that it would be a very hard task to put the matter beyond dispute, when once the object of my suspicions should favour me with an interview.

While I was yet balancing the *pros* and *cons* of the measure, another billet was put into my hands by Jennings, signed "Edward Maberly,

Captain \* \* \* regiment ;”—it requested an interview, that the writer might acquit himself of a commission of some delicacy, with which he was charged by a brother officer.

Wondering what on earth Captain Maberly, whose name I merely knew as that of a young officer in a corps quartered in the neighbourhood, could possibly have in common with myself, the thought suddenly occurred to me that his business might relate to my eccentric fellow-traveller, about whom I had felt so strong an interest, till he and his concerns were totally driven out of my head by the succession of unpleasant surprises which I had since experienced. Of course I gave directions that the “gallant officer,” as the phrase goes, should be admitted immediately.

The Captain, a gentlemanly, soldier-like man, whose air and manner evinced that he moved in the best society, while a scarcely perceptible touch of “the brogue” betrayed that he had drawn his first breath in the sister island, was ushered into the room, and received my compliment with the unembarrassed ease of a man of the world. Jennings, who, as I fancied,

surveyed the stranger with looks that betokened more of curiosity than he was in the habit of displaying, placed chairs and withdrew, when my unexpected visitor proceeded to open his commission.

This was, he informed me, to place in my hand a letter from his friend Major Fortescue of the \* \* Dragoons, who felt himself compelled to call upon me for an explanation of my conduct towards a young lady of rank, with whose family he was intimately connected, and announced himself as deputed by his aforesaid friend the Major, to arrange with any friend of mine the time and place of meeting.

Having delivered himself to this effect, the Captain quietly proffered me the billet alluded to, and, retiring to the other side of the room, amused himself by reconnoitring through his eye-glass a Dutch Fair, by Teniers, that hung against the wall, leaving me at full leisure to peruse the agreeable despatch of which he was the bearer.

“ SIR,

“ It is with painful reluctance that I yield to the dictates of an imperious and irresist-

ible necessity, which forces me to the performance of a task the most revolting to my nature. An interview of the kind I am compelled to demand of you, is at all times a matter to be deprecated, and is rendered doubly distressing when, in seeking it, I feel that I am repaying benefit with injury, by aiming at a life which has been risked to preserve my own.

“A miserable destiny, however, which I am unable to control, will have it so,—and forces me to be ungrateful rather than perjured.

“Be assured, Sir, no merely human power could have swayed me to the performance of an act which I detest; but Fate wills it, and I bow to the decree.

“My friend, who honours me by conveying this to your hands, is fully authorised to make every arrangement requisite; and I have only to add, that the earlier the hour may be that suits your convenience, the more desirable it will be to  
EUSTACE FORTESCUE.”

“C. Stafford, Esq. &c. &c.”

“Mighty evil, upon my word!” I half muttered to myself, as I refolded the note; then,

in a louder tone, "A most singular invitation indeed! — Pray, Sir, is your friend mad?"

"What, Sir, can possibly induce you to doubt his sanity?" returned my gallant friend, moving away from the picture, and planting himself in front of me, while his heightened complexion evinced the offence he took at my interrogatory.

"Simply, Sir," replied I, "because I cannot conceive that any man in his senses would think of sending such a letter as this, which I hold in my hand, to a man who knows no more of him than of Harry the Eighth, nor has ever so much as seen him in the course of his life. He talks of benefits which I never can have conferred, and regrets being obliged to seek the life of one who has never given the slightest cause of offence, either to the lady you have alluded to, or to himself."

"These are matters of which I am no judge, Sir," said Maberly coldly, "nor do I pretend to explain what the motives may be which, as he says, compel Major Fortescue to adopt the line of conduct he is pursuing. I have no doubt of their sufficiency, nor do I question either the soundness of his intellect, or his honour."

“But, Sir,” returned I, heartily provoked at the turn this affair seemed likely to take, “if your principal indeed seeks redress for any insult offered to Miss Stafford, I am not the person to whom he should apply.”

“I believe I am addressing Mr. Charles Stafford!” was his reply, accompanied with a look of mingled doubt and surprise.

“Undoubtedly you are, Sir; but Charles Stafford is as incapable of offering insult to a lady as Major Fortescue or yourself.”

“With that, Sir, I must repeat, I can have nothing to do; my business is simply to ascertain whether you will favour my friend with the meeting he desires — I am not here to discuss its propriety. — I cannot help observing, however, that you do not appear altogether unacquainted with the lady whose cause he advocates, — a lady whose name certainly never passed my lips.”

“That Miss Stafford has been protected by Major Fortescue from a most audacious and unprincipled attempt I am unquestionably aware; the only thing which I mean to deny is that I have been in any way concerned in it.”

The features of Maberly assumed an expression of incredulity, not unmixed with contempt for what he plainly considered the pusillanimity of my conduct in denying all participation in a transaction, now that it was no longer likely to pass unquestioned.—There was no misunderstanding the meaning which his eye conveyed, and I continued with the indignation to which his glance gave birth—“Thus far, Captain Maberly, I have spoken to vindicate myself against unfounded aspersion; if you attribute my so doing to any other motive than that which I have avowed, you are widely mistaken. The tongue, however, is not the only weapon with which I am prepared to defend my reputation when attacked, and you may inform your principal that, if he considers this declaration of mine insufficient, I have not the slightest reluctance to grant him the meeting he requires, whenever and wherever he pleases.”

“When a difference of this kind exists,” returned my companion, “the sooner it is adjusted the better for all parties. To-morrow morning, therefore, if you have no objection, my friend will expect the favour of your com-

pany, at seven, near the ruined chapel in the next parish ; the situation is a retired one, and little liable to interruption."

"Rely on my punctuality, Captain Maberly."

"Mr. Charles Stafford, your most *obedient*!"

he replied, resuming his hat, and putting on his gloves with the air of a man taking leave after a visit of ceremony ; then, with a slight bend, which seemed to intimate that my acceptance of his proposal had somewhat redeemed me in his opinion, he moved towards the door. I rang the bell, and attended him to the hall, where we separated, he to acquaint his principal with the result of his embassy, I to make such arrangements as the time would admit of for meeting my unknown antagonist in the field, and to execute some other measures which the uncertainty of the coming event rendered it advisable for me to set about forthwith.

To procure the assistance of a friend, who might accompany me to the scene of action, and officiate as my second, was become indispensable. This, therefore, was my first care. I could have wished that Allanby, on whose honour and friendship I placed the greatest reliance, might have



been the person, but this was out of the question; the distance was too great to admit of my applying to him; he was still, as I believed, in London, and the shortness of the time which must elapse before the decision of the quarrel precluded the possibility of a communication being made to him with any chance of success. I therefore turned my thoughts towards the neighbouring garrison, with many of the officers belonging to which I was on sufficient terms of intimacy to warrant a request that they would do me the favour to see me shot properly. The very first man to whom I applied, a young lieutenant who had been in the habit of accompanying me on shooting parties of a different description in the course of the preceding winter, willingly undertook the task; and this, the first object of my solicitude, being provided for, I had leisure to turn my attention to matters of scarcely less importance.

To write to my mother — the last communication she might ever receive from a son, whom, even when she believed him to be stigmatized and branded with justly deserved opprobrium and dishonour, she yet found it impossible to

banish from her affections! — The task was indeed a severe one; a thousand conflicting emotions warred in my bosom, and rendered me scarcely capable of carrying it into execution; my letter was however at length finished, and contained, of course, an absolute disavowal, on my part, of the whole of the conduct imputed to me by Lord Manningham, the full persuasion I felt that my name had been assumed by some impostor for the most infamous of purposes, together with a detail of such facts as, in the event of my not surviving the approaching contest, might tend to elucidate the mystery, and rescue my memory from the discredit which might otherwise attach to it, should I fall a victim to the artifices of a scoundrel, and to what, an internal voice began to whisper, was a mistaken sense of honour.

That my letter contained also assurances of the warmest love and affection, I need hardly say: the remembrance of all my mother's fondness, her more than maternal kindness from my earliest infancy — the reflection that the step I was about to take might deprive her, at once and for ever, of the only solace of her declining

years, the only hope of her widowed heart — that my falling in the encounter would too surely shake out with an unhallowed hand the few remaining sands that yet lingered in Time's failing hour-glass, and “bring down her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave” — all conspired to unman me, and shook for a moment the resolution I had formed of meeting my incomprehensible antagonist.

Not that I was altogether free from some rather unpleasant sensations of a nature purely selfish, when I considered the situation in which a few short hours might place me, and the more than questionable proposition how far I might be justified, in thus exposing my own life and aiming at that of another, before that Almighty Being, whose denunciations against the crime of murder I could not shut out from my memory.

In vain did I encourage myself by the argument that, as the usages of civilised society extend the principle of self-defence from our persons to our reputation, I was as much authorised to protect that which was dearer to me than life as to defend my life itself;—a voice, stronger than that of the world, told me that I

WAS WRONG!—The awakening tones of conscience, which I would fain have silenced had it been in my power, warned me of the fallacy of my reasoning, and thundered in my ear, “Thou shalt not kill!”—Pride, that sin by which fell the angels, and a false shame,—the dread of *what the world would say*,—still drove me on to disregard its faithful admonitions, and crushed the nascent intention of even yet avoiding to dip my hand in blood, while it presented to my view myself a mark for scorn “to point its slow and moving finger at,”—a wretched object loaded with the contempt and derision of all who knew me.—No!—it was too late!—The die was thrown, and I must stand the hazard of the cast.

With burning temples, and an aching heart, I retired to my room not daring to trust myself again in my mother’s presence, and, throwing myself on the bed, endeavoured to lose in the forgetfulness of slumber the few hours which must necessarily revolve before that at which Armitage had appointed to be with me.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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